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COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

VOL. IV.

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THE CALVIN TRANSLATION SOCIETY,

INSTITUTED IN MAY M.DCCC.XLIII.

FOR THE PUBLICATION OF TRANSLATIONS OF THE WORKS OF JOHN CALVIN.

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COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

BY JOHN CALVIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, AND COLLATED WITH THE AUTHOR'S FRENCH VERSION,

BY THE REV. JAMES ANDERSON.

VOLUME FOURTH.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR THE CALVIN TRANSLATION SOCIETY.
M.DCCC.XLVII.

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COMMENTARY

UPON

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

PSALM XCIII.

The psalm commences with the celebration of the infinite glory of God. It is then declared that such is his faithfulness that he never deceives his own people, who, embracing his promises, wait with tranquil minds for their salvation amidst all the tempests and agitations of the world.

1. *Jehovah hath reigned, he hath clothed himself with majesty ;*[1] *Jehovah hath clothed himself with strength, he hath girded himself :*[2] *he hath also established the world, it shall not be moved.*

[1] Horsley translates,—

"Jehovah is King,
Jehovah is gorgeously arrayed."

And, on the second line, he has the following note:—"The construction of the original is doubtful, though the sense be obvious. The text may be expounded in either of these two ways; יהוה (Jehovah) לבש (hath put on) גאות (majesty of dress;) or, גאות לבש (majesty of dress) [is] לבש (the dress) יהוה (of Jehovah.)"

[2] See vol. ii. p. 455, note 2. Bishop Lowth supposes that here, as well as in that passage, there is an allusion to the precious and magnificent ornaments of the priests' attire. "Such," says he, "was the gracefulness, such the magnificence of the sacerdotal vestments, especially those of the High Priest; so adapted were they, as Moses says, (Exod. xxviii. 2,) to the expression of glory and beauty, that to those who were impressed with an equal opinion of the sanctity of the wearer, nothing could possibly appear more venerable and sublime. To these, therefore, we find frequent allusions in the Hebrew poets, when they have occasion to describe extraordinary beauty or comeliness, or to delineate the perfect

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2. *Thy throne is stable ;*[1] *from then, from everlasting art thou.*

1. *Jehovah hath reigned.* We here see what I have lately adverted to, that in the power of God there is exhibited to us matter of confidence; for our not investing God with the power which belongs to him, as we ought to do, and thus wickedly despoiling him of his authority, is the source of that fear and trembling which we very often experience. This, it is true, we dare not do openly, but were we well persuaded of his invincible power, that would be to us an invincible support against all the assaults of temptation. All admit in word what the prophet here teaches, That God reigns; but how few are there who oppose this shield to the hostile powers of the world, as it becomes them to do, that they may fear nothing however terrible? In this then consists the glory of God, that he governs mankind according to his will. It is said that *he clothes himself with majesty and strength ;* not that we ought to imagine that there is any thing in him which is derived from another, but it is intended by the effect and indubitable experience to show his wisdom and righteousness in the government of mankind. The Psalmist proves that God will not neglect or abandon the world, from the fact that he created it. A simple survey of the world should of itself suffice to attest a Divine Providence. The heavens revolve daily, and, immense as is their fabric,

form of supreme Majesty. The elegant Isaiah (chap. lxi. 10) has a most beautiful idea of this kind when he describes, in his own peculiar manner, (that is, most magnificently,) the exultation and glory of the Church, after its triumphal restoration. Pursuing the allusion, he decorates her with the vestments of salvation, and clothes her in a robe of righteousness. He afterwards compares the Church to a bridegroom dressed for the marriage, to which comparison incredible dignity is added by the word *Ikohen*, a metaphor plainly taken from the apparel of the priests, the force of which, therefore, no modern language can express. No imagery, indeed, which the Hebrew writers could employ, was equally adapted with this to the display (as far as the human powers can conceive or depict the subject) of the infinite majesty of God, 'Jehovah' is therefore introduced by the Psalmist as 'clothed with glory and with strength,' (Psalm xciii. 1,) he is 'girded with power,' (Psalm lxv. 7;) which are the very terms appropriated to the describing of the dress and ornaments of the priests."—*Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, vol. i. pp. 174, 175.

[1] "Ou, preparé."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, prepared."

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and inconceivable the rapidity of their revolutions, we experience no concussion—no disturbance in the harmony of their motion. The sun, though varying its course every diurnal revolution, returns annually to the same point. The planets, in all their wanderings, maintain their respective positions. How could the earth hang suspended in the air were it not upheld by God's hand? By what means could it maintain itself unmoved, while the heavens above are in constant rapid motion, did not its Divine Maker fix and establish it? Accordingly the particle אַף, *aph*, denoting emphasis, is introduced—YEA, *he hath established it.*

2. *Thy throne is stable.* Some read, *is prepared*, and this agrees well with the context, provided we take the two clauses as one sentence, meaning— *O Lord, as thou art from eternity, even so thy throne is erected or prepared from that time.* For the sense which some have attached to the words, as if they contained a simple assertion of God's eternity, is poor; and the Psalmist evidently intends to say that as God is eternal in essence, so he has always been invested with power and majesty. The term *throne* signifies, by the figure synecdoche, righteousness, and office or power of government; it being customary to transfer such images taken from men to God, in accommodation to our infirmity.[1] By this ascription of praise the Psalmist effectually disposes of all the absurd ideas which have been broached, tending to deny or disparage the power of God, and declares, upon the matter, that God may sooner cease to be, than to sit upon his throne in the government of this world.

3. *The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah! the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods shall lift up their waves.*
4. *The waves*[2] *of the sea are terrible, by reason of the noise of great waters, Jehovah is terrible above.*

[1] "Selon que ces similitudes-ci prinses des hommes ont de coustume d'estre appropriees à Dieu, pour le regard et la portee de nostre infirmite."—*Fr.*

[2] The Hebrew word משברי, *mishberey*, here used for *waves*, means "waves" that "beat" against the shore or each other, and so are "broken," —"breakers." Accordingly, Mant translates, "Strong the breakers tossing

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5. Thy testimonies are singularly true : holiness is the glory of thy house, O Jehovah! for length of days.[1]

3. *The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah!* Various meanings have been attached to this verse. Some think there is an allusion to the violent assaults made upon the Church by her enemies, and the goodness of God seen in restraining them.[2] Others are of opinion that the words should be taken literally, and not figuratively, in this sense—Though the noise of many waters be terrible, and the waves of the sea more fearful still, God is more terrible than all. I would not be inclined to insist too nicely upon any comparison that may have been intended. I have no doubt the Psalmist sets forth the power of God by adducing one brief illustration out of many which

high." Horsley gives a similar version. He reads the third and fourth verses thus,—

3. "The floods, O Jehovah! raised,
The floods raised their voice;
The floods lifted up their waves,
With the sound of many waters.
4. Mighty are the breakers of the sea!
Mighty on High is Jehovah!"

As to the fourth line, "With the sound of many waters," he observes, "This is the first line of the fourth, but should be joined to the third verse. And are not the floods here mentioned, the fluids of the indigested chaos, in wild irregular agitation, before the Creator had reduced it to form and order? Or rather, may they not be mystical,—the tumults of the rebellious people?"

[1] "Domui tuæ decus, sanctitas Jehovah in longitudinem dierum."—*Lat.* The translation in the French version is different,—"A ta maison *est donc* magnificence: la sainctete du Seigneur *est pour* un long temps." "To thy house *then there is* glory: the holiness of the Lord *is for* a length of time." In the former version, holiness is represented to be the true glory and ornament of God's house; in the latter, it is described as the attribute of God.

[2] Dr Morison, after stating the opinion of Mudge, who thinks that this psalm was composed on occasion of some violent inundation, which threatened a general confusion to the world, adds, "It is more probable, perhaps, that the floods spoken of are entirely figurative; and that they represent in Eastern phrase, those powerful enemies by whom the peace of David and the ancient Church was so often disturbed. But though the floods were lifted high, and threatened destruction to those who were within their reach, yet Jehovah was seen, as it were, riding on their most tempestuous billows, and amidst their mightiest tumult, his throne was unshaken and his kingdom unmoved." In support of this view he refers to other passages of Scripture, as Isa. viii. 7, 8; xvii. 12, 13; and Job xlvi. 7, 8, where the confederated enemies of God's Church are compared to the tempestuous waves of the mighty ocean, which roll one after another with resistless fury upon the storm-tossed bark.

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might have been given,[1] intimating that we need not go farther for a striking instance of Divine power—one that may impress us with an idea of his tremendous majesty—than to the floods of waters, and agitations of the ocean; as in Psalm xxix. 4, the mighty voice of God is said to be in the thunder. God manifests his power in the sound of the floods, and in the tempestuous waves of the sea, in a way calculated to excite our reverential awe. Should it be thought that there is a comparison intended, then the latter clause of the verse must be understood as added, with this meaning, That all the terror of the objects mentioned is as nothing when we come to consider the majesty of God himself, such as he is in heaven. There is still another sense which may be extracted from the words, That though the world may to appearance be shaken with violent commotions, this argues no defect in the government of God, since he can control them at once by his dreadful power.

5. *Thy testimonies*[2] *are singularly true.* As yet the Psalmist has insisted upon the excellency of God in the work of creation, and the providential government of the world. Now he speaks of his distinguishing goodness to his chosen people, in making known to them the doctrine which bringeth salvation. He begins by commending the absolute trustworthiness and truthfulness of the law of God. This being a treasure which was not extended to all nations promiscuously, he adds immediately that the house of God would be adorned with a glory which should last for ever. The Divine goodness is displayed in every part of the world, but the Psalmist justly considers it as of all others the most inestimable blessing, that God should have deposited in his

[1] "Non dubito quin Propheta quasi *per hypotyposin* Dei potentiam hic nobis exprimat."—*Lat.* "Comme par une demonstration."—*Fr. Hypotyposis* means strictly the first rough sketch of a picture.

[2] "The testimonies of God, when taken generally, are the truths which he has testified or declared, inclusive not only of moral precepts, but of gracious and unchangeable promises. The combined result of which is, to impress on the minds of men the weighty consideration, that those who trust in the mercy of God must not, in a lower degree, venerate and adore his sanctity in all their converse with him."—*Walford.*

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Church the covenant of eternal life, and made his glory principally to shine out of it. Some translate the Hebrew word נאוה, *naävah, desirable,*[1] as if the Psalmist had said that *the adorning of the temple was precious;* but the grammatical construction will not admit of this. By *length of days* is meant *perpetual succession,*[2] and to this we find Isaiah referring in striking terms, (chap. lix. 21,) "Behold, I have put my word in thy mouth, in the mouth of thy seed, and of thy seed's seed," that the Divine truth might be preserved in faithful custody through successive ages.

PSALM XCIV.

The Psalmist implores Divine assistance against wicked and violent men, who persecuted the upright in a cruel and tyrannical manner. It is evident that he refers to domestic foes, whose unrighteous domination was as vexatious and oppressive to the Lord's people, as all the injuries received from the Gentile nations without.

1. *O Jehovah! God of vengeances; God of vengeances,*[3] *shine*

[1] "Quidam, נאוה, pro desiderabili accipiunt: acsi dixisset propheta, Templi decus esse pretiosum," &c.—*Lat.* The French version follows this exactly. But the sentence is unsatisfactory; and there would seem to be some mistake, or omission, in the original text. If the Hebrew word referred to be rendered *desirable*, then when joined to קדש, the clause would read, *holiness is desirable*, or *becoming, to thy house*, &c.—and not *the adorning of thy house is desirable*, or *precious*.

[2] "'Holiness becometh thine house—for ever,' לארך ימים, *le-orec yamim*, 'for length of days:' during the whole lapse of time; till the sun and moon shall be no more."—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

[3] This is a literal translation of the original Hebrew, and Archbishop Secker thinks it is much more spirited than that of our English version. The word *vengeance*, when applied to God, means nothing more than his retributive justice. It may not be one of the happiest words for representing the Hebrew term when used to express this attribute of Deity, being liable to be misunderstood, as if it implied a revengeful spirit, the sense which it commonly bears when applied to men. "This retributive justice," says Dr Adam Clarke, "is what we often term *vengeance*, but perhaps improperly; for vengeance with us signifies an excitement of angry passions, in order to gratify a vindictive spirit, which supposes itself to have received some real injury; whereas, what is here referred to is the simple act of justice that gives to all their due."

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forth.[1] 2. *Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth, render a reward to the proud.*

3. *O Jehovah! how long shall the wicked—how long shall the wicked triumph?*
4. *They pour forth, they speak hard things, all the workers of iniquity lift up themselves.*
5. *They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah! and afflict thy inheritance.*
6. *They slay the widow, and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*

1. *O Jehovah! God of vengeances.* We know that the Jews were surrounded by many neighbours who were not well affected towards them, and were thus incessantly subject to the assaults and oppression of bitter enemies. As this intestine persecution was even more afflictive than the rampant and unrestrained violence of the wicked, we need not wonder that the Psalmist should earnestly beseech God for deliverance from it. The expressions which he uses, calling upon God to *shine forth* conspicuously, and *lift himself up on high*, amount in common language to this, that God would give some actual manifestation of his character as judge or avenger; for in that case he is seen ascending his tribunal to exact the punishment due to sin, and demonstrate his power in preserving order and government in the world. The phraseology is used only in reference to ourselves, disposed as we are to feel as if he overlooked us, unless he stretched out his hand to help us in some visible and open manner. In calling him twice successively *the God of vengeances*, and then, *judge of the earth*, the Psalmist uses these titles as applicable to the present situation in which he stood, reminding Him in a manner of the office which belonged to him, and saying—O Lord! it is thine to take vengeance upon sinners, and judge the earth—see how they take advantage of the impunity which is extended to their guilt, and triumph audaciously in

[1] Mant renders,

"Beam forth with all thy radiance bright."

"The Hebrew verb," he observes, "signifies *to irradiate, shine forth*, as God in glory; Ps. lxxx. 1; l. 2; and that either in vengeance, as in this place, or kindness, as in Job x. 3."—*See Parkhurst's Lexicon* on יפע.

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their wickedness! Not that God needs to be admonished of his duty, for he never resigns himself to indifference, and even when he seems to delay his judgments, is only adjusting them according to what he knows to be the best season; but his people conceive of him in this way to themselves, and take occasion from this to embolden and stimulate themselves to greater vehemency in prayer.[1] The same may be said of the repetition which the Psalmist uses. When the wicked then indulge in unrestrained excesses, we are to remember that God can never cease to assert his character as the judge of the earth who takes vengeance upon iniquity. Does he seem in our carnal apprehension to have at any time withdrawn and hidden himself? let us put up without hesitation the prayer which is here taught us by the Holy Spirit, that he would *shine forth*.

3. *O Jehovah! how long shall the wicked?* The Psalmist justifies himself in this verse for the fervent importunity which he showed in prayer. There was need of immediate help, when the wicked had proceeded to such an extent of audacity. The necessity of our case may justly embolden us in our requests, which must be all the more readily heard as they are reasonable; and here the Psalmist insists that his complaints were not without cause, nor originated in trifling reasons, but were extorted by injuries of the most flagrant description. Notice is taken of the length of time during which their persecutions had lasted, as an aggravating circumstance. They had become hardened under the long-continued forbearance of God, and had in consequence contracted a shamelessness, as well as obstinacy of spirit, imagining that he looked upon their wickedness with an eye of favour. The term *how long* twice repeated, implies the extent of impunity which had been granted, that it was not as if they had newly started upon their career, but that they had been tolerated for a length of time, and had become

[1] "Mais les fideles s'arrestent à mediter ainsi en eux-mesmes la nature d'iceluy, afin de s'accourager à meilleure esperance, et soliciter à prier avec plus grande ardeur et vehemence."—*Fr.*

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outrageously flagitious. It was thus that in former times wicked men tyrannized to such a degree over the Church, while yet God did not interfere to apply a remedy; and we need not be surprised that he should subject her now to protracted persecutions, nor should we conclude that, because he does not immediately proceed to cure existing evils, he has utterly forsaken her. The term *triumph* denotes that fulness of audacious and boasting exultation which the wicked feel when they are intoxicated with continued rosperity, and conceive that they may indulge in every excess without restraint.

4. *They pour forth, they speak hard things.*[1] He shows in still clearer terms, how their fierceness in persecution was such that they did not scruple to glory in their guilt. The Hebrew verb נבע, *nabang*, means more than *to speak*. Literally it signifies to *rush* or *boil forth*, and comes to denote figuratively the uttering of reckless or rash words. We see how wicked men are instigated by pride and vain-glory, to demean and disgrace themselves so far as to boast vain-gloriously of their power, breathing forth threatenings of bloodshed, violence, and monstrous cruelty. It is to such ebullitions that the Psalmist refers, when men who are lost to all sense of shame and modesty boast of the wickedness which they can perpetrate at will. This is what he means by their *speaking hard things*, uttering discourse which is under no restraint of fear, or prudential consideration, but which launches into the most unbridled license. As the Lord's people had formerly to endure the heavy trial of seeing the Church subjected to this wild tyranny and misrule, we should account it no strange thing to see the Church suffering still under miserable misgovernment, or positive oppression, but should pray for help from God, who, though he connives at wickedness for a time, eventually comes to the deliverance of his children.

[1] In our English Bible this verse is put into the interrogative form, and the words "how long" are supplied: "*How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things?" Calvin translates it as a simple statement, and without any supplemental words; which Archbishop Secker considers to be more correct.

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5. *They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah!* Having spoken of their discourse or language as vain-glorious and shameless, he proceeds to speak of their deeds, in cruelly persecuting the Church. It is hard that even the subjects of heathen princes should be subjected to unjust persecution, but a more intolerable thing still, that those who are God's own people, his peculiar inheritance, should be trampled under the foot of tyranny. The prayer before us is one which, as I have already remarked, is given with the intention that we should prefer it ourselves, when we or others may be persecuted by wicked men, and especially intestine enemies. Our safety is dear to the Lord, not only as we are men, the workmanship of his hand, but as we are his peculiar heritage; and this should lead us, when wronged at any time, to betake ourselves to God with the more confidence. It is farther added—that they spare not *the widow*, and *the orphan, and murder the stranger*. God, while he has commanded us in general to cultivate equity and justice in our common intercourse, has commended the orphan, widow, and stranger, to our peculiar care, as being more exposed to injury, and therefore more entitled to humanity and compassion. To treat such objects with cruelty argues a singular degree of impiety, and contempt of divine authority, and is not only an outrage of common justice, but the infraction of a privilege of special protection which God has condescended to cast around them.[1] They who are chargeable with such conduct, particularly provoke the divine anger. As to little children especially, their helplessness and tender age will even protect them from being attacked by dogs and wild beasts. And what shall we think of the monstrous inhumanity of men, who would make them the objects of their assault? We have here a specimen of the dreadful state of matters which must then have prevailed in the Church of God. The law was there, and the ordinances of divine appointment, yet we see to what an awful extent every species of wickedness abounded. Let us beware lest we fall into a similar state of corruption, and should it so

[1] "Non seulement le droict commun est violé, mais aussi le privilege que Dieu a voulu ordonner pour les maintenir en sauvete et seurete."—*Fr.*

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happen under our own observation that men persecute the stranger, seize the widow, and rob the fatherless, let us, in imitation of the Psalmist, who would have us alleviate their misfortunes, pray God to undertake their defence.

7. *And they have said, God shall not see, the God of Jacob shall not know.*
8. *Understand, ye stupid* [1] *among the people : and ye fools, when will ye be wise ?*
9. *He that planted* [2] *the ear, shall he not hear ? he that formed the eye, shall he not see ?*
10. *He that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct ? he that teacheth man knowledge.*[3]

7. *And they have said, God shall not see.* When the Psalmist speaks of the wicked as taunting God with blindness and ignorance, we are not to conceive of them as just exactly entertaining this imagination of him in their hearts, but they despise his judgments as much as if he took no cognisance of human affairs. Were the truth graven upon men's hearts that they cannot elude the eye of God, this would serve as a check and restraint upon their conduct. When they proceed to such audacity in wickedness as to lay the hand of violence upon their fellow-creatures, to rob, and to destroy, it shows that they have fallen into a state of brutish security in which they virtually consider themselves as concealed from the view of the Almighty. This security sufficiently proves at least, that they act as if they never expected to be called to an account for their conduct.[4] Though they may not then be

[1] "בעירים, *boharim, ye brutish.* From בער, *a brute.*"—*Bythner.*

[2] "The Hebrew verb denotes *planting* in various senses: and is with great propriety applied to the wonderful structure of the ear, and its insertion into and connection with the head."—*Mant.*

[3] Upon this and the preceding verse, Grotius says, "This is a very excellent way of arguing; for whatever perfection there is in created beings, it is derived from God; and therefore it must be in him in the most eminent manner." It is well observed by Dr Adam Clarke, that "the Psalmist does not say, He that planted the ear *hath he not an ear?* He that formed the eye *hath he not eyes?* No, but shall he not *hear*—shall he not *see?* And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanizing God; of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit."

[4] "Et certes une asseurance tant lourde monstre qu'ils pechent tout

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guilty of the gross blasphemy of asserting in so many words that God is ignorant of what goes forward in the world—a mere nothing in the universe—the Psalmist very properly charges them with denying God's providential government, and, indeed, avowedly stripping him of the power and function of judge and governor, since, if they really were persuaded as they ought of his superintending providence, they would honour him by feeling a reverential fear—as I have elsewhere observed at greater length. He intends to express the lowest and most abandoned stage of depravity, in which the sinner casts off the fear of God, and rushes into every excess. Such infatuated conduct would have been inexcusable even in heathens, who had never heard of a divine revelation; but it was monstrous in men who had been brought up from infancy in the knowledge of the word, to show such mockery and contempt of God.

8. *Understand, ye stupid among the people.* As it was execrable impiety to deny God to be Judge of the earth, the Psalmist severely reprimands their folly in thinking to elude his government, and even succeed by artifices in escaping his view. The expression, *stupid among the people*, is stronger than had he simply condemned them as foolish. It rendered their folly more inexcusable, that they belonged to the posterity of Abraham, of whom Moses said, (Deut. iv. 7,) "What people is there so great, who have their gods so near unto them, as the Lord thy God hath this day come down unto thee? For this is your understanding and wisdom before all nations, to have God for your legislator."[1] Perhaps, however, he may be considered as addressing the rulers and those who were of higher rank in the community, and styling them *degraded among the people*, that is, no better than the common herd of the vulgar. Proud men, who are apt to be blinded by a sense of their importance, require to

ainsi comme s'ils ne devoyent jamais estre appelez à rendre raison de leur vie."—*Fr.*

[1] The Latin reads here as follows:—"Quis populus tam nobilis, qui deos sibi appropinquantes habeat, sicuti hodie Deus tuus ad te descendit? Hæc enim vestra est intelligentia coram cunctis Gentibus, et sapientia, Deum habere legislatorem."

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be brought down, and made to see that in God's estimation they are no better than others. He puts them on a level with the common people, to humble their self-complacency; or we may suppose that he hints with an ironical and sarcastic allusion to their boasted greatness, that they were distinguished above others chiefly for pre-eminent folly—adding, at the same time, as an additional aggravation, that they were obstinate in their adherence to it; for as much is implied in the question, *When will ye be wise?* We might consider it an unnecessary assertion of Divine Providence to put the question to the wicked, *Shall not he who made the ear hear?* because there are none so abandoned as openly to deny God's cognizance of events; but, as I have observed above, the flagrant audacity and self-security which most men display in contradicting his will, is a sufficient proof that they have supplanted God from their imaginations, and substituted a mere dead idol in his place, since, did they really believe him to be cognizant of their actions, they would at least show as much regard to him as to their fellow-creatures, in whose presence they feel some measure of restraint, and are prevented from sinning by fear and respect. To arouse them from this stupidity, the Psalmist draws an argument from the very order of nature, inferring that if men both see and hear, by virtue of faculties which they have received from God the Creator, it is impossible that God himself, who formed the eye and the ear, should not possess the most perfect observation.

10. *He that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct?* He would have them argue from the greater to the less, that if God did not spare even whole nations, but visits their iniquity with punishment, they could not imagine that he would suffer a mere handful of individuals to escape with impunity. The comparison intended, however, may possibly be between the Gentiles and the Jews. If God punished the heathen nations, who had not heard his word, with much severity, the Jews might expect that they, who had been familiarized to instruction in his house, would receive still sharper correction, and that he would vindicate his justice

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most in that nation over which he had chosen to preside. Still the former sense of the passage appears to me preferable, That it is folly in any number of individuals to flatter themselves with impunity, when they see God inflicting public punishment upon collective people. Some think there is an exclusive allusion to the signal and memorable instances of Divine judgment recorded in Scripture, as in the destruction of Sodom with fire from heaven, (Gen. xix.) and of the whole human family by the flood, (Gen. vii.) But the simpler meaning is best, That it were the height of madness in individuals to think that they could escape when nations perish. In adding that God *teacheth men knowledge*,[1] the Psalmist glances at the overweening confidence of such as despise God, and pride themselves in their acuteness and shrewdness, as we find Isaiah denouncing a woe against those crafty enemies of God who dig deep, that they may hide themselves from his sight, (chap. xxix. 15.) It is a disease prevalent enough in the world still. We know the refuges under covert of which both courtiers and lawyers take occasion to indulge in shameless mockery of God.[2] It is as if the Psalmist had said—You think to elude God through the confidence which you have in your acute understandings, and would pretend to dispute the knowledge of the Almighty, when, in truth, all the knowledge which is in the world is but as a drop from his own inexhaustible fulness.

11. *Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of men,*[3] *that they are vain.*[4]

[1] In our English Bible, the words *shall not he know?* are added. "But this is not acknowledged by the original nor by any of the versions. Indeed it is not necessary; for, either the words contain a simple proposition, 'It is he who teacheth man knowledge;' or this clause should be read in connection with v. 11, 'Jehovah, who teacheth man knowledge, he knoweth the devices of man, that they are vanity.' As he teaches knowledge to man, must He not know all the reasonings and devices of the human heart?"—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

[2] "Mais nous voyons avec quelles couvertures tant les courtisans que les gens de justice obscurcissent leurs entendemens afin que sans aucune vergongne ils osent bien se moquer de Dieu."—*Fr.*

[3] Horsley reads, "the devices of man:" and asking, Did not St Paul for אדם read ערם, or rather ערום? refers to 1 Cor. iii. 20.

[4] The original word הֶבֶל is "from הָבַל, which first signifies *to vanish*, or *come to nought*, as in Jer. ii. 5, 'They walked after והבל, vanity,

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12. *Blessed is the man whom thou hast instructed, O God! and taught out of thy law;*
13. *To give him rest from days of evil, whilst the pit is digged for the wicked.*

11. *Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of men, &c.* He again insists upon the folly of men in seeking to wrap themselves up in darkness, and hide themselves from the view of God. To prevent them from flattering themselves with vain pretexts, he reminds them that the mists of delusion will be scattered at once when they come to stand in God's presence. Nothing can avail them, so long as God from heaven stamps vanity upon their deepest counsels. The Psalmist's design in citing them before the Judge of all, is to make them thoroughly search and try their own hearts; for the great cause of their self-security lay in failing to realize God, burying all distinction between right and wrong, and, so far as that was possible, hardening themselves against all feeling. They might contrive to soothe their minds by means like these, but he tells them that God ridiculed all such trifling. The truth may be a plain one, and well known; but the Psalmist states a fact which many overlook, and which we would do well to remember, That the wicked, when they attempt to hide themselves under subtile refuges, cannot deceive God, and necessarily deceive themselves. Some read—*They*

ויהבלו, and vanished, *or* came to nought;' and if understood here in this sense, it must signify *vanishing*, *transient*, that soon comes to nothing; and accordingly the Syriac renders it a *vapour*. But there is another notion of הָבַל; it is put metaphorically for 'stultescere,' 'to grow foolish.' Thus in Ps. lxii. 11, it is best rendered from the Hebrew, 'Trust not in oppression and rapine, אל־תהבלו, become not vain,' *i. e.*, *fools*, to signify that those that so trust, that depend on unlawful means for enriching themselves, will certainly be deceived, find this the most perfect *folly* in the event. And the term *folly* being that by which the Atheist is most frequently expressed in Scripture, will be most agreeable to this place, where the Atheist's cogitations are described, v. 7, confident of *God's not seeing nor regarding;* which thoughts of his, as they are Atheistical, and so false, and so *foolish* in one sense, as *folly* is *ignorance*, so are they most impudent, (which is practical and the greatest *folly*,) will never secure his wicked actions of impunity, but, on the contrary, will betray him to all the ruin in the world. And to this sense it is, that in verse 8 we find it said in the like style, 'Understand, O ye brutish; and ye fools, when will ye be wise?' and so this is the adequate notion of the word here."—*Hammond.*

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(that is, men themselves) *are vanity;* but this is a forced rendering, and the form of expression is one which both in the Greek and Hebrew may be translated, *God knows that the thoughts of men are vain.*

12. *Blessed is the man whom thou hast instructed, O God!* The Psalmist now passes from the language of censure to that of consolation, comforting himself and others of the Lord's people with the truth, that though God might afflict them for a time, he consulted their true interests and safety. At no period of life is this a truth which it is unnecessary to remember, called as we are to a continued warfare. God may allow us intervals of ease, in consideration of our weakness, but would always have us exposed to calamities of various kinds. The audacious excesses to which the wicked proceed we have already noticed. Were it not for the comfortable consideration that they are a blessed people whom God exercises with the cross, our condition would be truly miserable. We are to consider, that in calling us to be his people, he has separated us from the rest of the world, to participate a blessed peace in the mutual cultivation of truth and righteousness. The Church is often cruelly oppressed by tyrants under colour of law—the very case of which the Psalmist complains in this psalm; for it is evident that he speaks of domestic enemies, pretending to be judges in the nation. Under such circumstances, a carnal judgment would infer, that if God really concerned himself in our welfare he would never suffer these persons to perpetrate such enormities. To prevent this, the Psalmist would have us distrust our own ideas of things, and feel the necessity of that wisdom which comes from above. I consider the passage to mean that it is only in the Lord's school we can ever learn to maintain composure of mind, and a posture of patient expectation and trust under the pressure of distress. The Psalmist declares that the wisdom which would bear us onward to the end, with an inward peace and courage under long-continued trouble, is not natural to any of us, but must come from God.[1] Accordingly,

[1] "Les hommes ne sont point si sages, qu'au milieu des afflictions con-

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he exclaims, that those are the truly blessed whom God has habituated through his word to the endurance of the cross, and prevented from sinking under adversity by the secret supports and consolations of his own Spirit.

The words with which the verse begins, *Blessed is the man whom thou hast instructed*, have no doubt a reference to chastisements and experience of the cross, but they also comprehend the gift of inward illumination; and afterwards the Psalmist adds, that this wisdom, which is imparted by God inwardly, is, at the same time, set forth and made known in the Scriptures.[1] In this way he puts honour upon the use of the written word, as we find Paul saying, (Rom. xv. 4,) that all things "were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." This shows from what quarter we are to derive our patience —the oracles of God, which supply us with matter of hope for the mitigation of our griefs. In short, what the Psalmist means is summarily this: Believers must, in the first place, be exhorted to exercise patience, not to despond under the cross, but wait submissively upon God for deliverance; and next, they must be taught how this grace is to be obtained, for we are naturally disposed to abandon ourselves to despair, and any hope of ours would speedily fail, were we not taught from above that all our troubles must eventually issue in salvation. We have here the Psalmist's testimony to the truth, That the word of God provides us with abundant ground of comfort, and that none who rightly avails himself of it need ever count himself unhappy, or yield himself to hopelessness and despondency. One mark by which God distinguishes the true from the false disciple is, that of his being ready and prepared to bear the cross, and waiting quietly for the Divine deliverance, without giving way to fretfulness and impatience. A true patience does not consist in presenting an obstinate resistance to evils, or in that unyielding stub-

tinuelles ils taschent d'un courage paisible de parvenir jusques au but; mais qui ceste sagesse-la leur est donnee de Dieu."—*Fr.*

[1] "Mais le Prophete adjouste incontinent, que ceste sagesse laquelle Dieu nous inspire au dedans, nous est quant-et-quant proposee et manifestee en la Loy."—*Fr.*

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bornness which passed as a virtue with the Stoics, but in a cheerful submission to God, based upon confidence in his grace. On this account it is with good reason that the Psalmist begins by laying it down as a fundamental truth, necessary to be learned by all the Lord's people, That the end of those temporary persecutions, to which they are subjected, is their being brought at last to a blessed rest after their enemies have done their worst. He might have contented himself with saying, that the truly blessed were those who had learned from God's word to bear the cross patiently, but that he might the more readily incline them to a cheerful acquiescence in the Divine disposals, he subjoined a statement of the consolation which tends to mitigate the grief of their spirits. Even supposing that a man should bear his trials without a tear or a sigh, yet if he champ the bit in sullen hopelessness—if he only hold by such principles as these, "We are mortal creatures," "It is vain to resist necessity, and strive against fate," "Fortune is blind"—this is obstinacy rather than patience, and there is concealed opposition to God in this contempt of calamities under colour of fortitude. The only consideration which will subdue our minds to a tractable submission is, that God, in subjecting us to persecutions, has in view our being ultimately brought into the enjoyment of a rest. Wherever there reigns this persuasion of a rest prepared for the people of God, and a refreshment provided under the heat and turmoil of their troubles, that they may not perish with the world around them,—this will prove enough, and more than enough, to alleviate any present bitterness of affliction.

By *evil days*, or *days of evil*, the Psalmist might thus mean the everlasting destruction which awaits the ungodly, whom God has spared for a certain interval. Or his words may be expounded as signifying, that the man is blessed who has learned to be composed and tranquil under trials. The rest intended would then be that of an inward kind, enjoyed by the believer even during the storms of adversity; and the scope of the passage would be, that the truly happy man is he who has so far profited, by the word of God, as to sustain the assault of evils from without, with peace and composure.

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But as it is added, *whilst*[1] *the pit is digged for the wicked*, it would seem necessary, in order to bring out the opposition contained in the two members of the sentence, to suppose that the Psalmist rather commends the wisdom of those who reckon that God afflicts them with a view to saving them from destruction, and bringing them eventually to a happy issue. It was necessary to state this second ground of comfort, because our hearts cannot fail to be affected with the most intense grief when we see the wicked triumph, and no Divine restraint put upon them. The Psalmist meets the temptation by appropriately reminding us that the wicked are left upon earth, just as a dead body which is stretched out upon a bed, till its grave be dug. Here believers are warned that, if they would preserve their constancy, they must mount their watch-tower, as Habakkuk says, (Hab. ii. 1,) and take a view in the distance of God's judgments. They shall see worldly men rioting in worldly delights, and, if they extend their view no farther, they will give way to impatience. But it would moderate their grief, would they only remember that those houses which are nominally appropriated to the living, are, in fact, only granted to the dead, until their grave be digged; and that, though they remain upon earth, they are already devoted to destruction.[2]

[1] In our English Bible it is "*until* the pit be digged:" on which Hammond, who gives the same translation as Calvin, comments as follows:—"The rendering of עד, *until*, in this place, may much disturb the sense, and make it believed that the *rest* מימי רע, *from the evil days*, *i. e.*, from persecution, (see Eph. v. 16,) which God gives to good men, is to continue *till* the pit be digged for the ungodly, *i. e.*, till the measure of their sins be filled up, and so destruction be ready for them: whereas, the contrary of this is evident, that either the destruction of the wicked is first, and the quiet and rest of the good (oppressed by them) a natural effect of that, and so subsequent to it; or that both of them are of the same date, at once 'tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest,' 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. And this is evidently the meaning of it here, and so will be discerned, if only the אד be rendered *dum*, *whilst*, (as it is elsewhere used, Jonah iv. 2, אד היותי, 'whilst I was,' Job i. 16, אד זה מדבר, 'whilst he was speaking,') for then thus it will run very fitly, 'That thou mayst give him rest—whilst the pit is digged——'" Horsley reads the verse—

"To produce ease for him out of the days of adversity,
Whilst the pit is digging for the impious."

[2] "Que les maisons qui sont destinees aux vivans, pour un peu de temps sont bien concedecs aux morts cependant qu'on leur fait leur fosse;

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14. *Surely Jehovah will not cast off his people, and he will not forsake his inheritance.*
15. *But judgment will return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart after him.*

14. *Surely Jehovah will not cast off his people.* He enforces the same truth which he had stated above in still clearer terms, denying it to be possible that God should cast off his people, whom he had chosen in a manner to be his inheritance. When assailed by afflictions, we should fly to this consideration, as a sanctuary of refuge, that we are God's people, gratuitously adopted into his family, and that he must necessarily have a most intimate and tender regard for our safety, having promised to watch as carefully over his Church as if it were his own heritage. We are thus again taught that our patience will soon give way and fail, unless the tumult of carnal suggestions be allayed by a knowledge of the Divine favour shining in upon our souls.

15. *But judgment will return unto righteousness.* In the dark season of affliction, it is not easy to recognize the secret love which God even then bears to his own children, and the Psalmist adduces another ground of comfort, in the consideration that God will eventually put an end to the confusions which perplex them, and reduce matters to order. The form of expression used by the Psalmist is a little obscure, and this has led some to read the first part of the verse, as if it contained two distinct clauses—*justice will return at the end,* and then, *judgment will return.* This is a violent wresting of the context. I have no doubt the Psalmist meant to say that judgment would be fitted or conformed to justice. And by judgment here is meant, as in many other places, the government or public state of matters. The confusion which prevails in the world, seems to argue some defect or unrighteousness of administration; and he holds out to us that it shall be well in the issue. More is said than merely that men

et qu'en ceste façon ceux qui neantmoins sont destinez à perdition, demeurent en vie," &c.—*Fr.*

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who indulged in reckless oppression would be brought back to equitable dealing. A deeper meaning is intended, That God, when he interposed to restore the condition of his people, would bring forth openly to the light his justice which had lain concealed; by which we are not to understand that he ever deviates the least in his providence from the strictest rectitude, only there is not always that harmony and arrangement which might make his righteousness apparent to man's view, and the correction of this inequality is here called justice of government.[1] As the sun's light is hid from view at night, or at a cloudy season, so when the wicked persecute the righteous, and are allowed to indulge in iniquity without restraint, the Divine justice is obscured by the clouds which are thus interposed between us and the providence of God, and judgment is in a manner separated from justice. But when things are brought back again to their proper state, justice and government are seen to harmonize perfectly together in the equality which prevails.[2] Faith, no doubt, should enable us to discern the justice of God even when things are most dark and disordered; but the passage speaks of what would be obvious to sense and actual observation, and asserts that the justice of God would shine as the sky when all is calm and serene.

And all that are upright in heart after him. Some read, *after it*, that is, *after righteousness;* but as by righteousness here we are to understand the equal and harmonious government which prevails when God takes vengeance upon the wicked and delivers his own people, this rendering will scarcely suit. It would rather seem that God himself is to be understood, so that the relative is here without an antecedent. In the Hebrew, when mention is made of God, the relative is not unfrequently put instead of the name. The words then mean, that upon God's restoring order in the world, his people would be encouraged to follow

[1] "Mais pource qu'au regard des hommes on ne voit pas tousjours une telle moderation ou temperature que sa justice soit apparente; laquelle est nommee Gouvernement juste, apres que l'inequalite est corrigee."—*Fr.*

[2] "On voit un tresbon accord entre la domination et justice en une equalite bien moderee."—*Fr.*

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him with greater alacrity. Even when called to bear the cross, they sigh after him under their troubles and distresses, but it binds them more closely to his service when they see his hand stretched forth in this visible manner, and sensibly experience his deliverance.

16. *Who will rise up for me against my adversaries? who will stand up for me*[1] *against the workers of iniquity?*
17. *Unless Jehovah had been my help, my soul had well nigh dwelt in silence.*[2]
18. *If I said, My foot has fallen, thy kindness, O Jehovah! has held me up.*[3]
19. *In the multitude of my thoughts,*[4] *thy comforts within me delight my soul.*[5]

16. *Who will rise up for me against my adversaries?* Here the Psalmist points out, in a lively and graphic manner, how destitute he was of all human aid. As if at the moment in danger, he cries out—*Who will stand up for me?* Who will oppose himself to my enemies? And immediately afterwards he replies, that had not God helped him, he must have despaired of safety. In declaring that he had been thus miraculously rescued from death, when deserted by all the world, he commends the more God's kindness and grace. When men aid us, they are only instruments by which the grace of God works; but we are apt not to recognize God's hand

[1] Horsley reads, "Who will set himself on my side?" The original words are מי־יתיצב לי. "The verb יתיצב," says this critic, "I take to be a military term; literally, 'to take one's place in battalion.'"

[2] "The Hebrew is דומה. *Sepulchrum*, Pagn. *Silentium*, Mont. The Septuagint has τῷ ᾅδῃ; and Jerome *in inferno*."—*Reeves' Collation of the Hebrew and Greek text of the Psalms.*

[3] "סעדני, *yisadeni*, *propped me.* It is a metaphor taken from any thing *falling*, that is *propped*, *shored up*, or *buttressed*. How often does the *mercy* of God thus prevent the ruin of weak believers, and of those who have been unfaithful?"—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

[4] In the Septuagint and Vulgate, it is "in the multitude of my sorrows."

[5] Horsley reads the whole verse thus:—

> "In the multitude of my anxieties within me,
> Thy comforts cheered my soul."

And he observes, "The original word ישעשעו signifies 'to cause to leap or dance for joy;' but the English language will not bear an application of this image to the soul; though we say, 'to make the *heart* leap for joy.'"

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when we see any subordinate agency in the deliverance. He speaks of *his life dwelling in silence*, (verse 17,) for the dead lie in the grave without feeling or strength. Thus the Psalmist owns that there was no means by which his life could have been preserved, had not God interposed without delay.

18. *If I said, My foot has fallen.* What is said in this verse confirms the preceding statement. The more to commend God's kindness and power, he declares that it was no common danger from which he had been rescued, but in a manner from present death. The import of the language is, that death stared him so full in view, that he despaired of himself, as Paul speaks of having had the message of death in himself, when his condition was desperate, and he had given up hope of life, (2 Cor. i. 9.) The fact of the Psalmist having been delivered after he had considered death certain, made the Divine interposition the more conspicuous. If we understand him as speaking of temporal death only in the expression, *My foot has fallen*—there is nothing unaccountable in the circumstance of his having despaired,[1] as God often prolongs the life of his people in the world, when they had lost hope, and were preparing for their departure. Possibly, however, the Psalmist only means that this was the language of sense; and this is the more probable, because we have already seen that he never ceased praying to God—a proof that he had still some hope. The next verse affords still further proof, for there he tells us that his afflictions were always mixed with some comfort. By *thoughts*, he means anxious and perplexing cares, which would have overwhelmed him had not consolation been communicated to him from above. We learn this truth from the passage, That God interposes in behalf of his people, with a due regard to the magnitude of their trials and distresses, and at the very moment which is necessary, enlarging them in their straits,

! "Si nous entendons le *glissement du pied*, seulement de la mort corporelle, il ne sera point absurde de dire que le Prophete ait este en ce desespoir.' —*Fr.*

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as we find stated in other places. The heavier our calamities grow, we should hope that Divine grace will only be the more powerfully manifested in comforting us under them, (Ps. iv. 1; cxviii. 5.) But should we through weakness of the flesh be vexed and tormented by anxious cares, we must be satisfied with the remedy which the Psalmist here speaks of in such high terms. Believers are conscious of two very different states of mind. On the one hand, they are afflicted and distressed with various fears and anxieties; on the other, there is a secret joy communicated to them from above, and this in accommodation to their necessity, so as to preserve them from being swallowed up by any complication or force of calamity which may assail them.

20. *Shall the throne of iniquities have fellowship with thee, framing molestation for law?*[1]
21. *They will gather together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.*
22. *But Jehovah has been my fortress, and my God, for the rock of my confidence.*
23. *And he shall repay their own iniquity upon them, and shall cut them off in their wickedness; Jehovah our God shall cut them off.*

20. *Shall the throne of iniquities have fellowship with thee?* He again derives an argument for confidence from the nature of God, it being impossible that he should show favour to the wicked, or sanction their evil devices. With God for their enemy, how could they escape being destroyed? The words have greater force from being thrown into the form of a question, to show how completely opposed all sin is to the divine nature. The term *throne* is used, because those against whom

[1] Dr Kennicott reads, "sub specie legis;" in which he is followed by Horsley: "Framing oppression under the pretence of law." Fry's version of the whole verse stands thus:—

"Is the tribunal of iniquity in accord with thee?
Decreeing wrong against me by law?"

"Legal forms," he remarks, "have often been given to the proceedings of the persecutors of God's people; and the sacred institutions, both of the civil and religious authorities, have been perverted to be the tools of oppression."

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the present charge is brought were not common robbers or assassins, who are universally recognized as infamous, but tyrants who persecuted the Lord's people under colour of law. These, although occupying the throne which has been consecrated to God, have stained and polluted it with their crimes, and therefore have nothing in common with it. The meaning is brought out more clearly in the subsequent clause of the verse, where they are declared to be persons utterly estranged from God, who *frame molestation for law*, or, as the Hebrew word חֹק, *chok*, signifies, *decree of law*, or *statute order*. The Psalmist aims at those profligate judges who, under pretence of pursuing the strict course of office, perpetrate the worst species of enormities. Judges of this abandoned character, as we know, with no other view than to retain possession of a specious name for integrity, invent various excuses to defend their infamous oppressions. The meaning of the Psalmist is apparent then; and it is this, that honourable as a throne may be, so far as the name goes, it ceases to have any worth or estimation with God when abused by wicked men; for iniquity can never meet with his approbation.

21. *They will gather together against the soul of the righteous.* As the Hebrew word גדד, *gadad*, or גוד, *gud*,[1] signifies to collect forces or a band of men, the Psalmist evidently intimates that he had to do with leading persons of influence, and not with those merely in private station. The term implies too, that it was not merely one or two private individuals who persecuted him, and others of the Lord's people, but a public convention. Melancholy and disgraceful must the state of matters have been, when the wicked thus ruled in lawful assembly, and those who formed the college of judges were no better than a band of robbers. The case becomes doubly vexatious, when the innocent victims of oppression are not only injured, but have a stigma fixed upon their character. And what more unseemly spectacle, than when the whole course of judicial administration is just a foul conspiracy

[1] "יגודון, (ja-ghod-du,) *will collect in a troop.* Targ. 'will heap together evils;' LXX. 'will hunt after.' From גדד, *ran by troops, invaded with an army.*"—*Bythner.*

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against good and innocent men?[1] The instance here recorded should prepare us for a like emergency, if it chance to occur in our own day, when the wicked may be permitted, in the providence of God, to mount the seat of judgment, and launch destruction upon the upright and the righteous, under colour of law. Intolerable as it might seem at first sight, that persons innocent of any crime should meet with cruel persecution, even from the hands of judges, so as to be loaded with ignominy, we see that God tried his children in other times by this double species of oppression, and that we must learn to bear submissively not only with unrighteous violence, but with charges most injurious to our character, and most undeserved.[2]

22. *But Jehovah has been my fortress.* The Psalmist declares, that great as were the extremities to which he had been reduced, he had found sufficient help in the single protection of God; thus passing a new commendation upon his power, which had been such as alone, and unaided, to put down the mightiest endeavours—all the force and the fury of his numerous enemies. He does more than say that God was a fortress, where he might hide with safety, and from the top of which he could bid defiance to every assault. Having congratulated himself upon the divine protection, he proceeds to denounce destruction upon his enemies; for it is to be considered as God's special prerogative to make the evil which his enemies devise against his people recoil upon their own heads. The mere defeating, and frustrating their attempts, would afford no inconsiderable display of divine justice; but the judgment of God is far more marvellously manifested when they fall into the pit which they themselves had prepared, when all the subtile plans which they have adopted for ruining the innocent end in their being destroyed by their own craftiness, and when having done their utmost, they fall

[1] "Deinde quid minus consentaneum, quam ut tota forensis ratio nihil aliud sit quam scelesta conspiratio ad insontes damnandos?"—*Lat.*

[2] "Toutesfois pour autant que Dieu a jadis exercé ses serviteurs en l'une et l'autre sorte de tentation, apprenons non seulement de porter patiemment une violence injuste, mais aussi les calomnies indignes," &c.—*Fr.*

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by their own sword. We are slow to believe that this shall be the issue, and accordingly it is said twice—*he shall cut them off—the Lord our God shall cut them off.* It may be noticed also, that the Psalmist in using the expression *our God*, holds out a ground of encouragement to the faithful, reminding us of what he had said above, that God will not forget his own inheritance, even his people whom he has brought unto the faith of himself.

PSALM XCV.

The inspired penman of this psalm, whoever he was,[1] in exhorting the Jews to praise God in solemn assembly, states two grounds why God should be praised; the one, that he sustains by his power the world which he created, the other, that he had of his free grace adopted the Church into a gracious relationship with himself. As many take God's praises into their lips in a hypocritical manner, he exhorts the people at the same time to be sincere, serious, and devoted in the service, and to show by the tenor of their life that they had not been chosen in vain. The more effectually to guard them against hypocrisy, he mentions that their fathers from the beginning had been of a stubborn spirit, and chargeable with ingratitude to God; and he takes notice of the dreadful punishment which fell upon them, and which might well deter their children from following in the footsteps of their rebelliousness.

1. *Come, let us rejoice before Jehovah; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation.*[2]

[1] This psalm has no inscription, but the Septuagint, Vulgate, Æthiopic, Arabic, and Syriac versions, and the apostle Paul in Heb. iv. 7, ascribe it to David; so that there can be no doubt that it is one of the compositions of the sweet singer of Israel.

[2] Horsley reads the second clause, "Let us raise the loud peal of melody to the Rock of our salvation;" on which he has the following note: "The verb הָרִיעַ signifies to make a loud sound of any sort, either with the voice or with instruments. In the Psalms it generally refers to the mingled din of voices and various instruments, in the temple-service. This wide sense of the word cannot be expressed otherwise in the Eng-

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2. *Let us come before his face with praise, and make a joyful noise before him in psalms.*
3. *For Jehovah is a great God, and a great King, above all gods.*
4. *Because in his hand are the deep places of the earth,*[1] *and the heights of the mountains are his.*
5. *Because the sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.*

1. *Come, let us rejoice before Jehovah.* This psalm is suited for the Sabbath, when we know that the religious assemblies were more particularly convened for the worship of God. It is not individuals among the godly whom he exhorts to celebrate the divine praises in private; he enjoins these to be offered up in the public meeting. By this he showed that the outward worship of God principally consisted in the sacrifice of praise, and not in dead ceremonies. He enjoins haste upon them; by which they might testify their alacrity in this service. For the Hebrew word קדם, *kadam*, in the second verse, which I have rendered, *let*

lish language than by a periphrasis." Bishop Mant, acting on this notion, has ventured, conformably to it, to specify in his version some of the instruments commonly used in the temple-worship:—

> "Come, let us sing Jehovah's praise!
> To him the pealing chorus raise,
> With trump, and harp, and cymbals ring;
> The rock on which our hopes are placed!"

[1] "The deep places of the earth," which are opposed to the "heights of the mountains," plainly mean the deepest and most retired parts of the terraqueous globe, which are explored by the eye of God, and by his only. Horsley reads the verse thus,—

> "The God in whose hand are the nethermost recesses of the earth,
> Whose also are the inaccessible summits of the mountains."

"This, and the following verse," says he, "are expositive of the greatness of the Godship of Jehovah, generally mentioned in the last verse. 'The God, in whose hand.' Thus, I have endeavoured to preserve the full force of the Hebrew phrase אשר בידו." Bythner's version of the last member is, "And the strength of the mountains is his." He derives the noun ותועפות, *vethoaphoth*, which he renders *strength*, from the verb יעף, *yaëph*, *was wearied;* and observes, that this is "a noun plural feminine, *weariness*,—by antiphrasis, *strength:* is read four times in Scripture, and is said of mountains, silver, and the unicorn, the weariness and difficulty in overcoming which, denote their great strength." Pagninus gives a similar rendering. Montanus has *cacumina*, *the tops*, with which the Septuagint seems to agree, reading τὰ ὑ̓ψη τῶν ὀρέων.

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us come before, &c., means to *make haste*. He calls upon them to speed into the presence of God; and such an admonition was needed, considering how naturally backward we are when called by God to the exercise of thanksgiving. This indirect charge of indolence in the exercise, the Psalmist saw it necessary to prefer against God's ancient people; and we should be made aware that there is just as much need of a stimulus in our own case, filled as our hearts are with similar ingratitude. In calling them *to come before God's face*, he uses language which was also well fitted to increase the ardour of the worshippers; nothing being more agreeable than to offer in God's own presence such a sacrifice as he declares that he will accept. He virtually thus says, in order to prevent their supposing the service vain, that God was present to witness it. I have shown elsewhere in what sense God was present in the sanctuary.

3. *For Jehovah is a great God.* By these words the Psalmist reminds us what abundant grounds we have for praising God, and how far we are from needing to employ the lying panegyric with which rhetoricians flatter earthly princes. First, he extols the greatness of God, drawing a tacit contrast between him and such false gods as men have invented for themselves. We know that there has always been a host of gods in the world, as Paul says, "There are many on the earth who are called gods," (1 Cor. viii. 5.) We are to notice the opposition stated between the God of Israel and all others which man has formed in the exercise of an unlicensed imagination. Should any object, that "an idol is nothing in the world," (Ibid. viii. 4,) it is enough to reply, that the Psalmist aims at denouncing the vain delusions of men who have framed gods after their own foolish device. I admit, however, that under this term he may have comprehended the angels, asserting God to be possessed of such excellence as exalted him far above all heavenly glory, and whatever might be considered Divine, as well as above the feigned deities of earth.[1] Angels are not indeed gods, but the name admits of an im-

[1] "Deum ita excellere, ut longe emineat supra omnem cœlestem gloriam et quicquid divinum est, non minus quam supra omne terrenum figmentum."—*Lat.*

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proper application to them on account of their being next to God, and still more, on account of their being accounted no less than gods by men who inordinately and superstitiously extol them. If the heavenly angels themselves must yield before the majesty of the one God, it were the height of indignity to compare him with gods who are the mere fictions of the brain. In proof of his greatness, he bids us look to his formation of the world, which he declares to be *the work of God's hands*, and subject to his power. This is one general ground why God is to be praised, that he has clearly shown forth his glory in the creation of the world, and will have us daily recognise him in the government of it. When it is said, that *the depths of the earth are in his hand*, the meaning is, that it is ruled by his providence, and subject to his power. Some read, *the bounds of the earth*, but the word means *abysses* or *depths*, as opposed to *the heights of the mountains*. The Hebrew word properly signifies *searching*.

6. *Come ye, let us worship, and bow down;*[1] *let us kneel before the face of Jehovah our Maker.*
7. *Because he is our God, and we the people of his pastures, and the flock of his hand; to-day, if ye will hear his voice.*

6. *Come ye, let us worship.* Now that the Psalmist exhorts God's chosen people to gratitude, for that pre-eminency among the nations which he had conferred upon them in the exercise of his free favour, his language grows more vehement. God supplies us with ample grounds of praise when he invests us with spiritual distinction, and advances us to a pre-eminency above the rest of mankind which rests upon no merits of our own. In three successive terms he expresses the one duty incumbent upon the children of Abraham, that of an entire devotement of themselves to God. The worship of God, which the Psalmist here speaks of, is assuredly a matter of such importance as to demand our whole strength; but we are to notice, that he particularly condescends upon one point, the paternal favour of God, evidenced in his exclusive adop-

[1] "That is, so as to touch the floor with the forehead, while the worshipper is prostrate on his hands and knees.—See 2 Chron. vii. 3."—*Fry.*

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tion of the posterity of Abraham unto the hope of eternal life. We are also to observe, that mention is made not only of inward gratitude, but the necessity of an outward profession of godliness. The three words which are used imply that, to discharge their duty properly, the Lord's people must present themselves a sacrifice to him publicly, with kneeling, and other marks of devotion. *The face of the Lord* is an expression to be understood in the sense I referred to above,—that the people should prostrate themselves before the Ark of the Covenant, for the reference is to the mode of worship under the Law. This remark, however, must be taken with one reservation, that the worshippers were to lift their eyes to heaven, and serve God in a spiritual manner.[1]

7. *Because he is our God.* While it is true that all men were created to praise God, there are reasons why the Church is specially said to have been formed for that end, (Isa. lxi. 3.) The Psalmist was entitled to require this service more particularly from the hands of his chosen people. This is the reason why he impresses upon the children of Abraham the invaluable privilege which God had conferred upon them in taking them under his protection. God may indeed be said in a sense to have done so much for all mankind. But when asserted to be the Shepherd of the Church, more is meant than that he favours her with the common nourishment, support, and government which he extends promiscuously to the whole human family; he is so called because he separates her from the rest of the world, and cherishes her with a peculiar and fatherly regard. His people are here spoken of accordingly as the *people of his pastures*, whom he watches over with peculiar care, and loads with blessings of every kind. The passage might have run more clearly had the Psalmist called them *the flock of his pastures*, and *the people of his hand*;[2]

[1] "Il faut neantmoins tousjours adjoustor ceste exception, que les fideles eslevans les yeux au ciel, adorent Dieu spirituellement."—*Fr.*

[2] Hammond, after making a similar remark, adds—"But it is more reasonable to take the explanation from the different significations of רעה, [the word which Calvin renders *pasture*,] as for *feeding*, so for *governing*, equally applicable to men and cattle; from whence it is but analogy, that מרעה, which signifies *a pasture*, where cattle are fed, should also signify *dominion* or *kingdom*, or any kind of πολιτεία, wherein a

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or, had he added merely—*and his flock*[1]—the figure might have been brought out more consistently and plainly. But his object was less elegancy of expression than pressing upon the people a sense of the inestimable favour conferred upon them in their adoption, by virtue of which they were called to live under the faithful guardianship of God, and to the enjoyment of every species of blessings. They are called *the flock of his hand*, not so much because formed by his hand as because governed by it, or, to use a French expression, *le Troupeau de sa conduite*.[2] The point which some have given to the expression, as if it intimated how intent God was upon feeding his people, doing it himself, and not employing hired shepherds, may scarcely perhaps be borne out by the words in their genuine meaning; but it cannot be doubted that the Psalmist would express the very gracious and familiar kind of guidance which was enjoyed by this one nation at that time. Not that God dispensed with human agency, intrusting the care of the people as he did to priests, prophets, and judges, and latterly to kings. No more is meant than that in discharging the office of shepherd to this people, he exercised a superintendence over them different from that common providence which extends to the rest of the world.

To-day, if you will hear his voice.[3] According to the Hebrew expositors, this is a conditional clause standing connected with the preceding sentence; by which interpretation the Psalmist must be considered as warning the people that they would only retain possession of their privilege and distinction so long as they continued to obey God.[4] The

people are *governed*. And then the other part, *the sheep of his hand*, will be a fit, though figurative, expression; the shepherd that feeds, and rules, and leads the *sheep*, doing it by his *hand*, which manageth the rod and staff, Ps. xxiii. 4. The Jewish Arab reads, 'the people of his feeding, or flock, and the sheep of his guidance.'"

[1] The text reads, "Si tantum nomen Legis posuisset." This is evidently a mistake of the printer for *Gregis*. The French version reads —"de Troupeau."

[2] The flock under his conduct or guidance.

[3] The ancient Jewish writers frequently apply these words to the Messiah: and they have argued from them, that if all Israel would repent but one day the Messiah would come; because it is said, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice.

[4] Hammond observes, that the particle ם‌, *im*, here rendered *if*,

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Greek version joins it with the verse that follows—*to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*, and it reads well in this connection. Should we adopt the distribution of the Hebrew expositors, the Psalmist seems to say that the posterity of Abraham were the flock of God's hand, inasmuch as he had placed his Law in the midst of them, which was, as it were, his crook, and had thus showed himself to be their shepherd. The Hebrew particle אִם, *im*, which has been rendered *if*, would in that case be rather expositive than conditional, and might be rendered *when*,[1] the words denoting it to be the great distinction between the Jews and the surrounding nations, that God had directed his voice to the former, as it is frequently noticed he had not done to the latter, (Ps. cxlvii. 20; Deut. iv. 6, 7.) Moses had declared this to constitute the ground of their superiority to other people, saying, "What nation is there under heaven which hath its gods so nigh unto it?" The inspired writers borrow frequently from Moses, as is well known, and the Psalmist, by the expression *to-day*, intimates how emphatically the Jews, in hearing God's voice, were his people, for the proof was not far off, it consisted in something which was present and before their eyes. He bids them recognise God as their

is in other places often used in an optative signification, as in Exod. xxxii. 32, "If thou wilt" for "O that thou wouldst forgive them;" and that therefore the rendering here may be, "O that to-day ye would hear his voice;"—a reading, he adds, which "may be thought needful to the making the sense complete in this verse, which otherwise is thought to hang (though not so fitly) on the 8th verse, and not to be finished without it." He then goes on to say, "But it may be considered also, whether this verse be not more complete in itself by rendering אִם, *if*, thus: 'Let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and sheep of his hand, if ye will hear his voice to-day,' *i.e.*, speedily,—if ye will speedily perform obedience to him,—setting the words in form of a conditional promise, thereby to enforce the performance of the condition on our part. The condition to the performance of which they are exhorted, (verse 6,) is paying God the worship and lowly obedience due to him; and the promise secured to them in this performance, that *he* will be their *God*, and they *the people of his pasture, &c.*, *i.e.*, that God will take the same care of them that a shepherd does of his sheep; preserve them from all enemies, Midianites, Philistines, Canaanites, &c."

[1] "Non erit proprie conditionalis, sed expositiva; vel pro temporis adverbio sumetur."—*Lat.*—"Ne sera pas proprement conditionnelle, mais expositive; ou bien elle sera prinse pour *Quand.*"—*Fr.*

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shepherd, inasmuch as they heard his voice; and it was an instance of his singular grace that he had addressed them in such a condescending and familiar manner. Some take the adverb to be one of exhortation, and read, *I would that they would hear my voice*, but this does violence to the words. The passage runs well taken in the other meaning we have assigned to it. Since they had a constant opportunity of hearing the voice of God—since he gave them not only one proof of the care he had over them as shepherd, or yearly proof of it, but a continual exemplification of it, there could be no doubt that the Jews were chosen to be his flock.

8. *Harden not your heart, as in Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness.*[1]
9. *When your fathers tempted me, they proved me, though yet they had seen my work.*
10. *Forty years*[2] *I strove with this generation, and said, They are a people that err in heart,*[3] *and they have not known my ways.*

[1] That is, in the wilderness of Midian, into which the people entered after passing through the Red Sea. In their way towards Horeb, their fourth station was at Rephidim, where they were chargeable with the sinful conduct here referred to.

[2] Paul, in quoting this passage in Heb. iii. 9, joins the words *forty years* to the concluding part of the preceding verse: "When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years;" whereas, in the Hebrew text, and as Calvin connects them, they form the commencement of the 10th verse. But this depends on the punctuation system of the Masorites, which the Apostle has not followed. It is of little consequence whether the words *forty years* are connected with the close of the 9th verse or the beginning of the 10th; the sense in either case being substantially the same. If the Israelites tempted God forty years, he strove with them during that period; and if he strove with them for so long a time, it was because they tempted him. The Apostle shows that either of these readings may be indifferently adopted, when, in the 17th verse of that chapter, instead of speaking of the forty years as the space of time during which the Israelites tempted God, he speaks of them as the period during which God was grieved by that rebellious people. "But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?"

[3] עם תעי לבב, *am toe lebab*, "a nation wandering of heart." תעי, *toe*, is from תעה, *taäh*, *he wandered*, *deviated*. The LXX., whom Paul follows in Hebrews iii. 10, have *ἀεὶ πλανῶνται*; from which Reeves conjectures, that instead of עם תעי, *populus errantium*, "a people that do err;" they might have read, עלם תעי, "always erring." The phrase, *erring in heart*, is emphatic, indicating the great stress which

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11. *Wherefore I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest.*[1]

8. *Harden not your heart, as in Meribah.* The Psalmist, having extolled and commended the kindness of God their Shepherd, takes occasion, as they were stiffnecked and disobedient, to remind them of their duty, as his flock, which was to yield a pliable and meek submission; and the more to impress their minds, he upbraids them with the obstinacy of their fathers. The term מריבה, *Meribah*, may be used appellatively to mean *strife* or *contention;* but as the Psalmist evidently refers to the history contained in Exod. xvii. 2-7,[2]

God lays on the state of the heart. Moses Stuart, in his commentary on this passage, as quoted in Heb. iii. 10, understands *the heart* as pleonastic; so that the phrase imports simply, *They always err, i.e.*, they are continually departing from the right way. But the phrase, we think, is intended to convey another idea,—that God, in judging of the character and conduct of men, has a special regard to the state of the heart. It is the heart which he principally requires in our obedience; and this he chiefly looks to in men's disobedience. When it is upright as to its general frame, design, and principle, he will bear with many failings and shortcomings. When it is insincere, he will set no value whatever on any outward professions or actions, however good in themselves. We ourselves act upon the same principle, and are justified in doing so. If a man discovers that he has just ground to suspect that the hearts of those with whom he has intimate intercourse, are false and deceitful towards him, he ceases to respect and love them, whatever may be their professions of friendship. The lines of the Greek poet, though inconsistent with the subdued feeling and tone of Christian benevolence, which, in this case, instead of hatred to the person, produces regret and grief; yet show that men universally, from their very nature, take into account the state of the heart in estimating the professions and conduct of others towards them :—

"Εχθος γαρ μοι κεινος ὁμως αἰδαο πυλῃσιν,
Ὁς χ' ἑτερον μεν κευθει ενι φρεσιν, αλλο δε βαζει."

"I hate him like the gates of hell, who, pretending fairly to me, reserves other things in his mind."

[1] The oath to which God here refers is recorded in Numbers xiv. 20, 23.

[2] This remarkable part of Jewish history is alluded to in other places, and for various purposes. Sometimes to reproach the Israelites on account of their sins, as in Deut. ix. 22, "And at Massah ye provoked the Lord to wrath;" sometimes to warn them against falling into the like sins, as in Deut. vi. 16, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God as ye tempted him in Massah;" and, at other times, as an instance of the faithfulness of the Levites who clave to God in these circumstances of trial, Deut. xxxiii. 8, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah."

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I have preferred understanding it of the place—and so of מסה, *Massah.*[1] In the second clause, however, the place where the temptation happened may be thought sufficiently described under the term *wilderness*, and should any read, *according to the day of temptation* (instead of *Massah*) *in the wilderness*, there can be no objection. Some would have it, that Massah and Meribah were two distinct places, but I see no ground to think so; and, in a matter of so little importance, we should not be too nice or curious. He enlarges in several expressions upon the hardness of heart evinced by the people, and, to produce the greater effect, introduces God himself as speaking.[2] By hardness of heart, he no doubt means, any kind of contempt shown to the word of God, though there are many different kinds of it. We find that, when proclaimed, it is heard by some in a cold and slighting manner; that some fastidiously put it away from them after they had received it; that others proudly reject it; while again there are men who openly vent their rage against it with despite and blasphemy.[3] The Psalmist, in the one term which he has employed, comprehends all these defaulters, the careless—the fastidious—such as deride the word, and such as

[1] In our English Bible it is, "in the provocation—in the day of temptation." But the most eminent critics agree with Calvin in thinking that it is better to retain the terms *Meribah* and *Massah* than to translate them. The places called by these names were so designated from the Israelites provoking and tempting God at them; and the retaining of the proper names gives more effect and liveliness to the allusion. See Psalm lxxxi. 7, vol. iii. p. 316, n. 2.

[2] Mant and Walford suppose that it is at the second part of verse 7, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," where God is introduced as speaking. "By an almost imperceptible transition," remarks the former critic, "the person is here [last clause of verse 7th] changed; Jehovah becòmes the speaker; and with a corresponding change of topic, the Ode, which had commenced with a spiritual exhortation to exult in the blessings of the Gospel, concludes with a solemn, affectionate, and impressive admonition of the danger of disobedience to it; leaving the warning upon the mind with an abruptness peculiarly well calculated to excite attention and to produce the desired effect." Dimock conjectures, that, as God is introduced as speaking in the last clause of the 7th verse, we should read with Mudge, בקולי, for בקלו, (or, as 37 MSS. and two others at first, בקולו,) "Oh that you may hear *my voice* this day: that you may not harden your hearts," &c.

[3] "Ab aliis frigide audiri, et contemptim; ab aliis fastidiose respui; ab aliis superbe rejici; ab aliis etiam furiose non sine probro et blasphemia proscindi."—*Lat.*

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are actuated in their opposition to it by frenzy and passion. Before the heart can be judged soft and pliable to the hearing of God's word, it is necessary that we receive it with reverence, and with a disposition to obey it. If it carry no authority and weight with it, we show that we regard him as no more than a mere man like ourselves; and here lies the hardness of our hearts, whatever may be the cause of it, whether simply carelessness, or pride, or rebellion. He has intentionally singled out the odious term here employed, to let us know what an execrable thing contempt of God's word is; as, in the Law, *adultery* is used to denote all kinds of fornication and uncleanness, and *murder* all kinds of violence, and injury, hatreds, and enmities. Accordingly, the man who simply treats the word of God with neglect, and fails to obey it, is said here to have a hard and stony heart, although he may not be an open despiser. The attempt is ridiculous which the Papists have made to found upon this passage their favourite doctrine of the liberty of the will. We are to notice, in the first place, that all men's hearts are naturally hard and stony; for Scripture does not speak of this as a disease peculiar to a few, but characteristic in general of all mankind, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) It is an inbred pravity; still it is voluntary; we are not insensible in the same manner that stones are,[1] and the man who will not suffer himself to be ruled by God's word, makes that heart, which was hard before, harder still, and is convinced as to his own sense and feeling of obstinacy. The consequence by no means follows from this, that softness of heart—a heart flexible indifferently in either direction, is at our command.[2] The will of man, through natural corruption, is wholly bent to evil; or, to speak more properly, is carried headlong into the commission of it. And yet every man, who disobeys God therein, hardens himself; for the blame of his wrong doing rests with none but himself.

9. *When your fathers tempted me, they proved me.* The

[1] "Combien qu'une telle perversite nous soit naturelle, toutesfois pource qu'elle est volontaire, et que nous ne sommes pas insensibles comme les pierres."—*Fr.*

[2] "Il ne s'ensuit pas neantmoins qu'il soit en nostre puissance d'amollir nostre cœur, ou de le flechir en l'une et l'autre part."—*Fr.*

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Psalmist insinuates, as I have already remarked, that the Jews had been from the first of a perverse and almost intractable spirit. And there were two reasons which made it highly useful to remind the children of the guilt chargeable upon their fathers. We know how apt men are to follow the example of their predecessors; custom begets a sanction; what is ancient becomes venerable, and such is the blinding influence of home example, that whatever may have been done by our forefathers passes for a virtue without examination. We have an instance in Popedom, of the audacity with which the authority of the fathers is opposed to God's word. The Jews were of all others most liable to be deceived upon this side, ever accustomed as they were to boast of their fathers. The Psalmist accordingly would detach them from the fathers, by taking notice of the monstrous ingratitude with which they had been chargeable. A second reason, and one to which I have already adverted, is, that he would show them the necessity in which they stood of being warned upon the present subject. Had their fathers not manifested a rebellious spirit, they might have retorted by asking the question, Upon what ground he warned them against hardness of heart, their nation having hitherto maintained a character for docility and tractableness? The fact being otherwise—their fathers having from the first been perverse and stubborn, the Psalmist had a plain reason for insisting upon the correction of this particular vice.

There are two ways of interpreting the words which follow. As *tempting God* is nothing else than yielding to a diseased and unwarrantable craving after proof of his power,[1] we may consider the verse as connected throughout, and read, *They tempted me and proved me, although they had already seen my work.* God very justly complains, that they should insist upon new proof, after his power had been already amply testified by undeniable evidences. There is another meaning, however, that may be given to the term *proved*,—according

[1] "When the Scriptures speak of men as *tempting* God, the meaning is, that men do that which puts the divine patience, forbearance, goodness, &c., to a trial; *i. e.*, makes it difficult, as it were, to preserve a strict regard to these."—*Stuart on Heb.* iii. 8.

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to which, the meaning of the passage would run as follows:—Your fathers tempted me in asking where God was, notwithstanding all the benefits I had done them; and they proved me, that is, they had actual experience of what I am, inasmuch as I did not cease to give them open proofs of my presence, and consequently they saw my work. Whatever sense we adopt, the Psalmist's design is plainly to show how inexcusable the Jews were in desiring a discovery of God's power, just as if it had been hidden, and had not been taught them by the most incontestible proofs.[1] Granting that they had received no foregoing demonstration of it, they would have evinced an unbecoming spirit in demanding of God why he had failed to provide them with meat and drink; but to doubt his presence after he had brought them from Egypt with an outstretched hand, and evidenced his nearness to them by most convincing testimonies,—to doubt his presence in the same manner as if it had never been revealed, was a degree of perverse forgetfulness which aggravated their guilt. Upon the whole, I consider the following to be the sense of the passage—Your fathers tempted me, although they had abundantly proved—perceived by clear and undeniable evidences, that I was their God—nay, although my works had been clearly set before them. The lesson is one which is equally applicable to ourselves; for the more abundant testimonies we may have had of the power and loving-kindness of the Lord, the greater will our sin be, if we insist upon receiving additional proofs of them. How many do we find in our own day demanding miracles, while others murmur against God because he does not indulge their wishes? Some may ask why the Psalmist singles out the particular case of Meribah, when there were many other instances which he might have adduced. They never ceased to provoke God from the moment of their passing the Red Sea; and in bringing this one charge only against them, he might seem by his silence on other points to justify their conduct. But the figure synecdoche is common in Scripture, and it would be

[1] "D'autant qu'ils ont desiré que la vertu de Dieu, laquelle leur estoit declaree par tant d'experiences, leur fust manifestee, comme s'ils ne l'eussent jamais cognue."—*Fr.*

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natural enough to suppose that one case is selected for many. At the same time, another reason for the specification may have been, that, as plainly appears from Moses, the ingratitude and rebellion of the people reached its greatest height on this occasion, when they murmured for water. I am aware that interpreters differ upon this. Such, however, was the fact. They then crowned their former impiety; nor was it until this outcry was made, as the consummating act of all their preceding wickedness, that they gave open proof of their obstinacy being incurable.[1]

10. *Forty years I strove with this generation.*[2] The Psalmist brings it forward as an aggravation of their perverse obstinacy, that God strove with them for so long a time without effect. Occasionally it will happen that there is a violent manifestation of perversity which soon subsides; but God complains that he had constant grounds of contention with his people, throughout the whole forty years. And this proves to us the incurable waywardness of that people. The word *generation* is used with the same view. The word דור, *dor*, signifies an age, or the allotted term of human life; and it is here applied to the men of an age, as if the Psalmist had said, that the Israelites whom God had delivered were incorrigible, during the whole period of their lives. The verb אקום, *akut*, which I have rendered *I strove*, is, by some, translated *I contemned*, and in the Septuagint it reads, προσωχθισα,[3] *I was incensed*, or *enraged;* but Hebrew interpreters retain the genuine meaning, That God strove with them in a continual course of contention. This was a remarkable proof of their extreme obstinacy; and God is introduced in the verse as formally pronouncing judgment upon them, to intimate, that after having shown

[1] "Solus ille strepitus, quasi omnium actionum catastrophe, palam ostenderit insanabilem esse eorum pervicaciam."—*Lat.*

[2] "*The men of that age*, or, as we say in English, *the generation* then upon the stage."—*Stuart on Heb.* iii. 10.

[3] "προσωχθιζα, *I was indignant, was offended at.* The word is Hellenistic. The Greeks use ὀχθέω and ὀχθίζω. According to etymology, it consists of πρός, *to, against, upon*, and ὀχθη, *bank, shore.* It is applied primarily to a ship infringing upon the shore, or, as we say, running aground. It answers to the Hebrew קץ, קום, מאס, &c."—*Stuart on Heb.* iii. 10.

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their ungodliness in so many different ways, there could be no doubt regarding their infatuation. *Erring in heart*, is an expression intended not to extenuate their conduct, but to stamp it with folly and madness, as if he had said, that he had to do with beasts, rather than men endued with sense and intelligence. The reason is subjoined, that they would not attend to the many works of God brought under their eyes, and more than all, to his word; for the Hebrew term דרך, *derech*, which I have rendered *ways*, comprehends his law and repeated admonitions, as well as his miracles done before them. It argued amazing infatuation that when God had condescended to dwell in such a familiar manner amongst them, and had made such illustrious displays of himself, both in word and works, they should have shut their eyes and overlooked all that had been done. This is the reason why the Psalmist, considering that they wandered in error under so much light as they enjoyed, speaks of their stupidity as amounting to madness.

11. *Wherefore I have sworn in my wrath.* I see no objection to the relative אשר, *asher*, being understood in its proper sense and reading—*To whom I have sworn.* The Greek version, taking it for a mark of similitude, reads, AS *I have sworn.* But I think that it may be properly considered as expressing an inference or conclusion; not as if they were then at last deprived of the promised inheritance when they tempted God, but the Psalmist, having spoken, in the name of God, of that obstinacy which they displayed, takes occasion to draw the inference that there was good reason for their being prohibited, with an oath, from entering the land. Proportionally as they multiplied their provocations, it became the more evident that, being incorrigible, they had been justly cut off from God's rest.[1] The meaning would be more clear by reading in the pluperfect tense—*I had sworn;* for God had already shut them out from the promised inheritance, having foreseen their misconduct before he thus strove with them. I have elsewhere adverted to the

[1] "Satis superque innotuit, quia corrigi nullo modo poterant, non temere fuisse abdicatos a requie Dei."—*Lat.*

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explanation which is to be given of the elliptical form in which the oath runs.[1] The land of Canaan is called God's *rest* in reference to the promise. Abraham and his posterity had been wanderers in it until the full time came for entering upon the possession of it. Egypt had been a temporary asylum, and, as it were, a place of exile. In preparing to plant the Jews, agreeably to his promise, in their rightful patrimony of Canaan, God might very properly call it his rest. The word must be taken, however, in the active sense; this being the great benefit which God bestowed, that the Jews were to dwell there, as in their native soil, and in a quiet habitation. We might stop a moment here to compare what the Apostle states in the third and fourth chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews, with the passage now before us. That the Apostle follows the Greek version, need occasion no surprise.[2] Neither is he to be considered as undertaking professedly to treat this passage. He only insists upon the adverb *To-day*, and upon the word *Rest*. And first, he states that the expression *to-day*, is not to be confined to the time when the Law was given, but properly applies to the Gospel, when God began to speak more openly. The fuller and more perfect declaration of doctrine demanded the greater share of attention. God has not ceased to speak: he has revealed his Son, and is daily inviting us to come unto him; and, un-

[1] See Commentary, Ps. xxvii. 13, and lxxxix. 35. "The Hebrews used אִם, in the latter clause of an oath, which ran thus: *God do so to me*, IF (אִם) *I do thus*, &c. See the full form in 1 Sam. iii. 17; 2 Sam. iii. 35; 2 Kings vi. 31. The former part of this oath was sometimes omitted, and אִם had then the force of a strong negative; see 2 Sam. xi. 11; 1 Sam. xiv. 45, *alibi; vide* Ges. Heb. Lex. under אִם, no. 6. So in Psalm xcv. 11, אִם יְבֹאוּן contains a strong negative, which the LXX., and Paul after them, (Heb. iii. 11,) have rendered *εἰ εἰσελεύσονται, they shall not enter.*"—*Stuart on Heb.* iii. 11. "The expression," says Dr Owen, "is imperfect, and relates to the oath of God, wherein he sware by himself. As if he had said, 'Let me not live, or not be God, if they enter,' which is the greatest and highest asseveration that they should not enter. And the concealment of the engagement is not, as some suppose, from a *πάθος*, causing an abruptness of speech, but from the reverence of the person spoken of. The expression is perfectly and absolutely negative. So Mark viii. 12, with Matth. xvi. 4; 1 Sam. xiv. 44; 1 Kings xx. 10."—*Commentary on Heb.* iii. 11.

[2] See vol. i. p. 103, note.

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doubtedly, it is our incumbent duty, under such an opportunity, to obey his voice. The Apostle next reasons from the *rest*, to an extent which we are not to suppose that the words of the Psalmist themselves warrant.[1] He takes it up as a first position, that since there was an implied promise in the punishment here denounced, there must have been some better rest promised to the people of God than the land of Canaan. For, when the Jews had entered the land, God held out to his people the prospect of another rest, which is defined by the Apostle to consist in that renouncing of ourselves, whereby we rest from our own works while God worketh in us. From this, he takes occasion to compare the old Sabbath, or rest, under the Law, which was figurative, with the newness of spiritual life.[2] When it is said that he *swore in his wrath*, this intimates that he was in a manner forced to inflict this punishment, that the provocation was of no common or slight kind, but that their awful obstinacy inflamed his anger, and drew from him this oath.

PSALM XCVI.

This psalm contains an exhortation to praise God, an exhortation which is directed not only to the Jews, but to all nations. We must infer from this, that it has reference to the kingdom of Christ. God's name could not be called upon in any other part of the world than Judea, until it had been revealed; and the heathen nations were at that time necessarily altogether incapacitated for any such exercise.[3] Yet it is evident that the Holy Spirit stirred up the saints who were under the Law to celebrate the Divine praises, till the period should arrive when Christ, by the spread of the Gospel, should fill the whole earth with his glory.

1. *Sing to Jehovah a new song, sing unto Jehovah all the earth.*

[1] "Subtilius disputat quam ferant Prophetæ verba."—*Lat.*
[2] "Vetus et legale Sabbathum quod umbratile tantum erat, cum spirituali vitæ novitate."—*Lat.*
[3] "Mutæ erant ac surdæ."—*Lat.*

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2. *Sing unto Jehovah, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day.*
3. *Declare his glory among the heathen; his wonders among all people.*

1. *Sing unto Jehovah a new song.* This commencement shows that, as I have already observed, the Psalmist is exhorting the whole world, and not the Israelites merely, to the exercise of devotion. Nor could this be done, unless the gospel were universally diffused as the means of conveying the knowledge of God. The saying of Paul must necessarily hold true, "How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" (Rom. x. 14.) The same Apostle proves the calling of the Gentiles, by adducing in testimony of it, "Praise the Lord, ye Gentiles, with his people"—from which it follows, that fellowship in the faith stands connected with the joint celebration of praise, (Rom. xv. 11.) Besides, the Psalmist requires a *new song*,[1] not one which was common, and had formerly been raised. He must therefore refer to some unusual and extraordinary display of the Divine goodness. Thus, when Isaiah speaks of the restoration of the Church, which was wonderful and incredible, he says, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," (chap. xlii. 10.) The Psalmist intimates accordingly, that the time was come when God would erect

[1] We meet with a psalm very similar to this, in 1 Chron. xvi., delivered by David to Asaph, to be sung on occasion of the removing of the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Zion. But the ode, as it stands in 1 Chron. xvi., is considerably longer, extending from the 8th verse to the 36th; and this is only the part of it from the 23d to the 33d verse. It has been supposed that this part was extracted from the psalm above mentioned, and, with a few inconsiderable alterations, adapted to the solemnity of the dedication of the second temple. This opinion is founded upon the inscription of the psalm in the Septuagint, Vulgate, Æthiopic, and Arabic versions, which is, "A song of David when the house was built after the captivity." Consequently, strictly speaking, this is not a *new song*. But it may be called *new*, from its having been adapted to a new purpose—from its having been intended to celebrate new mercies conferred upon the Jews, and to lead the mind forward to the glorious era of the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom, which probably was the matter of more general expectation among the chosen people, at the period when the temple was rebuilt, than when the ark was brought to Mount Zion from the house of Obed-edom. It may be observed, that the first verse is not in the original poem, as recorded in the book of Chronicles, but appears to have been added for the new occasion to which this shorter psalm was adapted.

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his kingdom in the world in a manner altogether unlooked for. He intimates still more clearly as he proceeds, that all nations would share in the favour of God. He calls upon them everywhere to show forth his salvation, and, in desiring that they should celebrate it from day to day, would denote that it was not of a fading or evanescent nature, but such as should endure for ever.

3. *Declare his glory among the heathen.* Additional terms are adduced to commend the salvation spoken of. It is called *his glory* and *his wonders;* which is equivalent to saying that it was glorious and admirable. By such titles the Psalmist would distinguish it from any deliverances which had formerly been granted, as indeed there can be but one opinion, that when God appeared as Redeemer of all the world, he gave a display of his mercy and of his favour, such as he never vouchsafed before. This salvation it was impossible, as I have said, that the Gentile nations could have celebrated, had they been left without it. The words teach us that we can never be said to have rightly apprehended the redemption wrought out by Christ, unless our minds have been raised to the discovery of something incomparably wonderful about it.

4. *For Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised; he is terrible above all gods.*[1]
5. *For all the gods of the nations are vanities;*[2] *but Jehovah made the heavens.*
6. *Strength and honour are before him; power and glory are in his sanctuary.*

4. *For Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised.* He particularly describes that God, whom he would have men

[1] The original word for *gods* is אֱלֹהִים, *elohim.* Dr Adam Clarke, who doubts whether this word is ever by fair construction applied to false gods or idols, reads—

"Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised.
Elohim is to be feared above all."

[2] "Ou, idoles."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, idols."

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to celebrate, and this because the Gentile nations were prone to merge into error upon this subject. That the whole world might abjure its superstitions, and unite in the true religion, he points out the one only God who is worthy of universal praise. This is a point of the greatest importance. Unless men are restrained by a due respect to it, they can only dishonour him the more that they attempt to worship him. We must observe this order if we would not profane the name of God, and rank ourselves amongst unbelieving men, who set forth gods of their own invention. By *gods* in the verse may be meant, as I observed already, (Ps. xcv. 3,) either angels or idols. I would still be of opinion that the term comprehends whatever is, or is accounted deity. As God, so to speak, sends rays of himself through all the world by his angels, these reflect some sparks of his Divinity.[1] Men, again, in framing idols, fashion gods to themselves which have no existence. The Psalmist would convince them of its being a gross error to ascribe undue honour either to the angels or to idols, thus detracting from the glory of the one true God. He convicts the heathen nations of manifest infatuation, upon the ground that their gods are vanity and nought, for such is the meaning of the Hebrew word אֱלִילִים, *elilim*,[2] which is here applied to idols in contempt. The Psalmist's great point is to show, that as the Godhead is really and truly to be found in none but the one Maker of the world, those religions are vain and contemptible which corrupt the pure worship of him. Some may ask, Are angels

[1] "Quia Deus per angelos irradiat totum mundum, in illis refulgent Deitatis scintillæ."—*Lat.* "Pource que Dieu jette comme ses rayons sur tout le monde par les anges, des estincelles de Divinite reluisent en iceux."—*Fr.*

[2] אֱלִיל, *elil*, signifies *a thing of nought*; as if from אַל, *not*, the ל being doubled to denote extreme nothingness. Thus a false vision or prophecy, on which no dependence can be placed, is called אֱלִיל, *elil*, "a thing of nought," Jer. xiv. 14, and a shepherd that leaves the flock, and instead of visiting, healing and feeding them, devours and tears them in pieces, is called in Zech. xi. 15, 16, "a pastor, הָאֱלִיל, *haelil*, *of no value*." In this sense the word is used of the false gods of the heathen. Instead of being אֱלֹהִים, *elohim*, *gods*, they are אֱלִילִים, *elilim*, *mere nothings*. Accordingly, Paul, in 1 Cor. viii. 4, speaks of an idol as being "nothing in the world."

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then to be accounted nothing and vanity, merely because many have been deceived in thinking them gods? I would reply, that we do injury to the angels when we give them that honour which is due to God only; and, while we are not on this account to hold that they are nothing in themselves, yet whatever imaginary glory has been attached to them must go for nothing.[1] But the Psalmist has in his eye the gross delusions of the heathen, who impiously fashioned gods to themselves.

Before refuting their absurd notions, he very properly remarks of God that he is *great, and greatly to be praised*—insinuating that his glory as the infinite One far excels any which they dreamt of as attaching to their idols. We cannot but notice the confidence with which the Psalmist asserts the glory of the true God, in opposition to the universal opinion which men might entertain. The people of God were at that time called to maintain a conflict of no inconsiderable or common description with the hosts and prodigious mass of superstitions which then filled the whole world. The true God might be said to be confined within the obscure corner of Judea. Jupiter was the god everywhere received—and adored throughout the whole of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Every country had its own gods peculiar to itself, but these were not unknown in other parts, and it was the true God only who was robbed of that glory which belonged to him. All the world had conspired to believe a lie. Yet the Psalmist, sensible that the vain delusions of men could derogate nothing from the glory of the one God,[2] looks down with indifference upon the opinion and universal suffrage of mankind. The inference is plain, that we must not conclude that to be necessarily the true religion which meets with the approbation of the multitude; for the judgment formed by the Psalmist must have fallen to the ground at once, if religion were a thing to be determined by the suffrages of men, and his worship depended upon their caprice. Be it then that ever so many agree in error, we shall insist after the Holy Ghost that they

[1] "Sed quicquid imaginarium illis affingitur, nihilum esse."—*Lat.*
[2] "Quia eorum vanitas nihil derogat unius Dei gloriæ."—*Ib.*

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cannot take from God's glory; for man is vanity himself, and all that comes of him is to be mistrusted.[1] Having asserted the greatness of God, he proves it by reference to the formation of the world, which reflects his perfections.[2] God must necessarily exist of himself, and be self-sufficient, which shows the vanity of all gods who made not the world. The *heavens* are mentioned—a part for the whole—as the power of God is principally apparent in them, when we consider their beauty and adornment.

6. *Strength and honour are before him.* I translate the Hebrew word הוד, *hod*, by *strength*, and think those interpreters who render it *glory* have not duly considered the context. It is evident that the next member of the verse is a repetition, and there it reads, *Power and glory are in his sanctuary.* The Psalmist means that we cannot be said to know God if we have not discovered that there is in him an incomparable glory and majesty. He first takes notice of his power and strength, as that in which his glory consists. There, as God is invisible, he directs the thoughts of his people to the sanctuary, which we have already seen to be the symbol of his presence. Such is the weakness of our minds that we rise with difficulty to the contemplation of his glory in the heavens. The Psalmist reminds us that we have no reason to say that his glory is obscure, since there were emblems of his presence in the temple, the sacrifices, and the ark of the covenant. Let us endeavour, when we make mention of God, to conceive of this glory which shines

[1] "Car tout ainsi qu'ils sont vanite, aussi tout ce qui procede d'eux est vain et plein de deception."—*Fr.*

[2] "The argument of God's superiority over all other beings, drawn from his creation of the world, is sublimely expressed in the following lines ascribed by Justin Martyr (*de Monarchid.* p. 159, ed. Oxon. 1703) to Pythagoras,—

Εἴ τις ἐστὶ, Θεός εἰμι, πάρεξ ἑνὸς, οὗτος ὀφείλει
Κόσμον ἴσον τούτῳ στῆσας εἰπεῖν ἐμὸς οὗτος.

One God our hearts confess: whoe'er beside
Aspires with Him our homage to divide,
A world as beauteous let him first design,
And say, its fabric finished, 'This is mine.'"
Merrick's Annotations.

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before him—otherwise, if we do not apprehend his power, it is rather a dead than a living God whom we worship.[1]

7. *Give to Jehovah, O ye assemblies of peoples! give to Jehovah glory and strength.*[2]
8. *Give to Jehovah the glory of his name; bring an offering,*[3] *and come into his courts.*
9. *Worship before Jehovah in the beautyof the sanctuary;*[4] *let the whole earth tremble before his face.*

7. *Give to Jehovah, &c.* Since praise waited for God in Zion, (Ps. lxv. 1,) and that was the place devoted to the celebration of his worship, and the posterity of Abraham were alone invested with the privilege of priesthood, we cannot doubt that the Psalmist refers here to that great change which was to take place in the Church upon the advent of Christ. An opposition or distinction is intended between God's ancient people and the Gentile tribes, which were to be afterwards adopted into the same fellowship. To declare *his glory and strength*, is the same with declaring the *glory of his strength*. And to show that man can boast nothing

[1] "Car ceux qui separent de luy sa puissance, imaginent plustost une essence morte, qu'une Divinite vive."—*Fr.*

[2] The original word for *strength* is עֹז, *oz*, which is derived from עָזַז, *azaz*, *he was strong*. "The same word," says Hammond, "signifies what the Greeks call ἐξουσία, *power*, *dominion*, *empire*. In the notion of *strength* or *valour* it may probably be used in verse 6, where as *beauty* so *strength* is said to be in his sanctuary; *beauty* in respect of the glory of the divine presence, by the guard of angels that attend there, and *strength* in respect of the assistance that is by God provided and furnished there to all that seek it by prayer. But the other notion is fitter for this place, where the word is joined with *glory* and attributed to God; and so in 1 Peter v. 11, which seems to be taken from hence, it is αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, 'to him be glory and dominion;' and hence God's title of παντοκράτωρ is best rendered, not 'almighty,' or 'he that hath all strength,' but 'he that hath the עֹז or κράτος, dominion or empire over all.'"

[3] Horsley reads, "Take an offering." "*A mincha*," says he, "an offering of bread and flour, not of flesh."

[4] The words בְּהַדְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ, which Calvin renders "in the beauty of the sanctuary," are rendered in our English Bible "in the beauty of holiness." The Septuagint reads, ἐν αὐλῇ ἁγίᾳ αὐτοῦ, "in the court of his holiness;' from which it has been thought probable that the text originally stood שַׁעַר־קֹדֶשׁ בחצר. See this word at the end of the preceding verse. In Psalm xxix. 2, the same sentence occurs. The version of Calvin, and that of Jerome, which is precisely the same, *in decore sanctuarii*, partake both of the Hebrew and Septuagint reading.

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of his own, and in refusing to celebrate God, impiously despoils him of his just honours, he subjoins, *Give unto the Lord the glory of his name;* an expression which denotes that God borrows nothing from without, but comprehends all that is worthy of praise in himself. He calls upon the Gentile nations in so many words to render unto God the same worship which the Jews did; not that we must worship God now according to the outward ritual which was prescribed under the Law, but he signifies that there would be one rule and form of religion in which all nations should accord. Now, unless the middle wall of partition had been broken down, the Gentiles could not have entered along with God's children into the courts of the sanctuary. So that we have here a clear prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, who needed to have their uncleanness taken away before they could be brought into the holy assembly. The *mincha*, or oblation, was only one kind of sacrifice, but it is here taken to denote the whole worship of God, because it was a part of divine service more ordinarily practised. We see from this, and other passages, that the inspired penmen describe the inward worship of God under symbols common in the age when they lived. God would not have meat-offerings presented to him after Christ had come; but the words which the Psalmist employs intimate that the doors of the temple, once shut, were now to be opened for the admission of the Gentiles. The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, (chap. xiii. 15,) tells us what are those sacrifices with which God will now be worshipped. Hence the absurdity of the Papists, who would adduce such passages in support of the mass and their other fooleries. We may very properly learn from the words, however, that we ought not to come empty-handed into the presence of God, enjoined as we are to present ourselves and all that we have as a reasonable service unto Him, (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 5.)

9. *Worship before Jehovah.* The Psalmist prosecutes the same train of sentiment. In requiring oblations of his people, God was not to be considered as standing in need of the services of the creature, but as giving them an

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opportunity of professing their faith. The true reason, therefore, is here mentioned why the oblation was enjoined, That his people might prostrate themselves before him, and acknowledge that they and all belonging to them were his. Mention is made of *the beauty of the temple*, referring to the fact that the Gentiles should be raised to a new honour, in being associated into one body with God's chosen people.[1] At the time when this psalm was written, it was generally deemed scarcely credible that the heathen nations would be admitted into the temple in company with the holy seed of Abraham. This should make us think all the more highly of our calling as Gentiles, which seemed then so incredible and impracticable a thing. We may be convinced that God only could have opened for us the door of salvation. The *beauty of the temple* is an expression intended to beget a reverential view of the temple, that men may approach it with humble fear, instead of rushing without consideration into God's presence. The clause which follows in the verse is inserted for the same purpose—*tremble before his face*, intimating that we should prostrate ourselves as suppliants before him when we consider his awful majesty. Not that he would deter worshippers from drawing near to God. They should esteem it their greatest pleasure and enjoyment to seek his face. But he would have us humbled to the right and serious worship of God. I may add, that the beauty or glory of the sanctuary did not consist in silver and gold, in the preciousness of the material of which it was made, nor in polished stones, nor in any splendour and decoration of this kind, but in the representation of the heavenly pattern which was shown to Moses on the mount, (Exod. xxv. 9.)

10. *Say among the heathen, Jehovah reigneth; also the world shall be established, it shall not be moved: he shall judge the peoples*[2] *in righteousness,* [literally, *in righteousnesses.*]
11. *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder, and the fulness thereof.*

[1] "Pour monstrer que les Gentils devoyent estre receus à un honneur nouveau, qu'ils feront un mesme corps avec le peuple eleu."—*Fr.*

[2] "*The peoples.* The Hebrew word is plural, and it is rendered plurally by all the ancient versions. It is not *one people* only, but *all the nations upon earth*, that God will judge."—*Street.*

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12. *Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; likewise let all the trees of the wood rejoice* [1]

13. *Before Jehovah; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.* [2]

10. *Say among the heathen, Jehovah reigneth.* His language again implies that it is only where God rules and presides that he can be worshipped. The Gentiles could not possibly profess the worship of God, so long as his throne was only in the small corner of Judea, and they were not acknowledging his government. Accordingly, the Psalmist speaks of his extending his kingdom to all parts of the world, with the view of gathering unto himself in one, those who had formerly been divided and scattered. The expression, *Say among the heathen*, signifies that God would enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom by his word and doctrine. What is said of the *world being established*, is particularly worthy of our observation. So far as the order of nature is concerned, we know that it has been Divinely established, and fixed from the beginning; that the same sun, moon, and stars, con-

[1] The Hebrew verb רננו, *rannenu*, here rendered *rejoice*, "expresses," says Mant, "the vibratory motion either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lips. Hence it signifies 'to wave to and fro' as trees." In support of this sense of the word he refers to Bishop Horsley's note on Psalm xcviii. 8, and Parkhurst's Lexicon on רנן, i. ii. Accordingly, he translates the verse—

> "Be glad, ye fields, and fruits, the fields that spread
> Wave high, ye woods, in worship wave the head;"

which, he observes, will remind the reader of Adam and Eve's morning hymn:—

> "—— and wave your tops, ye pines,
> With every plant, in sign of worship wave."
> *Paradise Lost*, v.

[2] This psalm has been admired for its grandeur and magnificence. The three last verses in particular have been frequently quoted as a specimen of sublimity in sentiment and language, which cannot be surpassed. "Nothing can excel in this respect," remarks Bishop Lowth, "that noble exultation of universal nature in the 96th Psalm, which has been so often commended, where the whole animate and inanimate creation unite in the praises of their Maker. Poetry here seems to assume the highest tone of triumph and exultation, and to revel, if I may so express myself, in all the extravagance of joy."—*Lectures on Sacred Poetry*, vol. i. p. 378

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tinue to shine in heaven; that the wicked and the unbelieving are sustained with food, and breathe the vital air, just as do the righteous. Still we are to remember that so long as ungodliness has possession of the minds of men, the world, plunged as it is in darkness, must be considered as thrown into a state of confusion, and of horrible disorder and misrule; for there can be no stability apart from God. The world is very properly here said therefore to be established, that it should not shake, when men are brought back into a state of subjection to God. We learn this truth from the passage, That though all the creatures should be discharging their various offices, no order can be said to prevail in the world, until God erect his throne and reign amongst men. What more monstrous disorder can be conceived of, than exists where the Creator himself is not acknowledged? Wicked and unbelieving men may be satisfied with their own condition, but it is necessarily most insecure, most unstable; and destitute as they are of any foundation in God, their life may be said to hang by a thread.[1] We are to recollect what we have seen taught, (Ps. xlvi. 5,) "God is in the midst of the holy city, she shall not be moved." Very possibly there may be an indirect allusion to the imperfect and uncompleted state of things under the Law, and a contrast may have been intended between the perfect condition of things which should obtain under Christ, and the prelude to it under the former period. Next he predicts that the kingdom to be introduced should be distinguished by righteousness, according to what we have seen, (Ps. xlv. 6,) "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." The term *judging*, in the Hebrew, includes government of any kind. If God's method of governing men be to form and regulate their lives to righteousness, we may infer, that however easily men may be satisfied with themselves, all is necessarily wrong with them, till they have been made subject to Christ. And this righteousness of which the Psalmist speaks has not reference merely to the outward actions. It comprehends a new heart,

[1] "Semper tamen fluctuari necesse est, et vitam coram pendere de filo, quia in Deo fundatus non est eorum status."—*Lat.*

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commencing as it does in the regeneration of the Spirit, by which we are formed again into the likeness of God.

11. *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.* With the view of giving us a more exalted conception of the display of God's goodness in condescending to take all men under his government, the Psalmist calls upon the irrational things themselves, the trees, the earth, the seas, and the heavens, to join in the general joy. Nor are we to understand that by *the heavens* he means the angels, and by *the earth* men;[1] for he calls even upon the dumb fishes of the deep to shout for joy. The language must therefore be hyperbolical, designed to express the desireableness and the blessedness of being brought unto the faith of God. At the same time, it denotes to us that God does not reign with terror, or as a tyrant, but that his power is exercised sweetly, and so as to diffuse joy amongst his subjects. The wicked may tremble when his kingdom is introduced, but the erection of it is only the cause of their fear indirectly.[2] We might notice also, that the hyperbole here employed does not want a certain foundation of a more literal kind. As all elements in the creation groan and travail together with us, according to Paul's declaration, (Rom. viii. 22,) they may reasonably rejoice in the restoration of all things according to their earnest desire. The words teach us how infatuated that joy is, which is wantonly indulged in by men who are without God. From the close of the psalm, we learn that it is impossible to experience the slightest measure of true joy, as long as we have not seen the face of God, *Rejoice before the Lord, because he cometh.* And if the very sea and land mourn so long as God is absent, may we not ask what shall become of us, who are properly the subjects of God's dreadful curse? The Psalmist, to remove all doubt regarding an event which might seem incredible, repeats his assertion of it, and states, at the same time, in what that rectitude consists, which he had formerly

[1] "Neque enim metonymice de angelis vel hominibus loquitur."—*Lat.* "Il ne faut pas penser que ce soit yci la figure nommee Metonymie, et que par les Cieux il entende les Anges, par la Terre les hommes."—*Fr.*

[2] "C'est une chose accidentale."—*Fr.*

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mentioned, when he adds, that *God shall govern the world with righteousness and truth.* This shows us that it is only by the light of God's righteousness and truth that the wickedness and hypocrisy of men can be removed and dispelled.

PSALM XCVII.

The description which we have of the kingdom of God in this psalm, does not apply to the state of it under the Law. We may infer, accordingly, that it contains a prediction of that kingdom of Christ, which was erected upon the introduction of the Gospel. The Psalmist, while he commends it to us by insisting upon its greatness and glory, so well calculated to compel the reverential fear of men, gives an amiable representation of it, by informing us that it has been erected for the salvation of mankind sinners.

1. *Jehovah reigns: let the earth rejoice, let the great islands*[1] *be glad.*
2. *Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation*[2] *of his throne.*

[1] "Ou, que beaucoup d'isles."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, let the many isles." Horsley and some other critics object to translating the original word, אִיִּים, *iyim*, by *isles*. He reads, "Let the various settlements of man rejoice:" on which he observes, "I cannot more exactly render the force of the Hebrew אִיִּים, than by this periphrasis. The English language hath no single word to convey the same idea; and the word 'isles' or 'islands,' hath hardly any relation to it." Fry's note here is as follows:—"The Hebrew terms rendered, 'the multitude of the isles,' 'the various settlements of men,' 'the extended shores,' seem in a special manner to designate these western parts of the world, which were known as distant coasts visited by the ships of Tyre. All Europe might originally fall under this denomination, with some parts of the sea coasts of Africa, and even of Asia; nor can there be any doubt, that all subsequent discoveries by sea, once uninhabited, but now colonized, and settled from the old countries, would be designated by this term. Some nations of this description are called upon, in particular, to rejoice in the Saviour's appearing."

[2] The word מכון, *mechon*, here rendered "habitation," is from כון, *kun*, *he prepared, fitted, confirmed.* "It is used," says Hammond, "for *a place, seat*, but especially *a basis*, whereon anything is set: from whence the LXX. had their μεχωνὰθ, (the very Hebrew מכונות) for *basis*, 1 Kings

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3. *A fire shall go before his face, and shall burn up his enemies round about.*
4. *His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth shall see, and tremble.*
5. *The hills flow down like wax at the presence of Jehovah, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.*

1. *Jehovah reigns.* His inviting men to rejoice, is a proof that the reign of God is inseparably connected with the salvation and best happiness of mankind. And the joy he speaks of being common to the whole world, and to the regions beyond the seas, it is evident that he predicts the enlargement of God's kingdom, which had been confined within the narrow boundaries of Judea, to a far wider extent. The Psalmist, in setting forth the various particulars of the Divine glory in the four verses which follow, would seek to impress all men with a reverential fear of him. Thus he gives us a representation of the formidable majesty attaching to God, that he may dash and humble vain confidence and carnal pride. A cloudy sky overawes us more than a clear one, as the darkness produces a peculiar effect upon the senses. The Psalmist makes use of this symbol, no doubt, to impress the world with the greater reverence of God. Others refine more upon the words, and think that clouds are said to be round about God, to check human rashness and presumption, and restrain that excessive curiosity which would pry more than is fit into the mysteries of Godhead. This is an interpretation of the words which makes them convey a very useful lesson; but I am against all refined renderings, and think that the Psalmist intended in associating darkness with God, to

vii. 27. The Chaldee here retains the original מכון, but the LXX., from the notion of the verb for *fitting*, read κατόρθωσις, 'the setting right of his throne;' the Syriac, by way of paraphrase, 'by equity and judgment thy throne is confirmed:' all which concur to the notion of *basis* or *foundation*, which is the thing that gives the *rectitude* first, and then the *stability*, to the chair or throne that is set on it. And so that is unquestionably the right intelligible rendering of the phrase, 'Righteousness and judgment are the (not habitation but) basis of his throne,' *i. e.*, his sentences, decrees, judicatures, are all built upon righteousness and judgment, as a throne is built and established on a foundation."

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impress the hearts of men with a fear of him in general.[1] The same meaning is brought out in the remaining context, when *fire is said to go before him, and burn up his enemies, his lightnings to shake the earth, and the mountains to flow down.* Should any object that this does not agree with what was said of the joy which his kingdom diffuses, I might answer, first, that although God is ready on his part to diffuse blessedness wherever he reigns, all are not capable of appreciating it. Besides, as I have already hinted, the truth is one of use to believers, humbling the pride of the flesh, and deepening their adoration of God. God's throne is represented as founded in *justice* and *judgment,* to denote the benefit which we derive from it. The greatest misery which can be conceived of, is that of living without righteousness and judgment, and the Psalmist mentions it as matter of praise exclusively due to God, that when he reigns, righteousness revives in the world. He as evidently denies that we can have any righteousness, till God subjects us to the yoke of his word, by the gentle but powerful influences of his Spirit. A great proportion of men obstinately resist and reject the government of God. Hence the Psalmist was forced to exhibit God in his severer aspect, to teach the wicked that their perverse opposition will not pass unpunished. When God draws near to men in mercy, and they fail to welcome him with becoming reverence and respect, this implies impiety of a very aggravated description; on which account it is that the language of denunciation suits with the kingdom of Christ. The Psalmist intimates that those who should despise God in the person of his only-begotten Son, will feel in due time and certainly the awful weight of his majesty. So much is implied in the expression used—*The earth* SHALL SEE. For the wicked, when they find that their attempts are vain in fighting against God, resort to subterfuge and concealment. The Psalmist declares that they would not succeed by any such vain artifice in hiding themselves from God.

[1] "Que le Prophete a voulu par ce regard obscur de Dieu, toucher au vif les cœurs des hommes, afin qu'ils tremblent."—*Fr.*

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6. *The heavens have declared his righteousness, and all the people have seen his glory.*
7. *Confounded be all those who serve graven images, who glory in their inventions ;*[1] *let all the gods worship before him.*
8. *Zion heard, and was glad ; and the daughters of Judah*[2] *rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Jehovah !*

6. *The heavens have declared his righteousness.* Here he states that there would be such an illustrious display of the righteousness of God, that the heavens themselves would herald it. The meaning is not the same as in the beginning of the nineteenth psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God," &c. In that psalm David means no more than that the wisdom and power of God are as conspicuous in the fabric of the heavens, as if God should assert them with an audible voice. The meaning of the passage before us is, that the spiritual righteousness of God should be so signally manifested under the reign of Christ as to fill both heaven and earth. There is much force in this personification, in which the heavens, as if even they were penetrated with a sense of the righteousness of God, are represented as speaking of it. It is equally probable, however, that the heavens signify here *the angels, who are contained in heaven,* by the figure of metonomy or synecdoche, while, in the corresponding clause, instead of the earth being mentioned, he speaks of the peoples who dwell upon it. The angels may very properly be said to announce and celebrate the Divine glory.

7. *Confounded be all those who serve graven images.* The Psalmist draws a broad distinction here, as in the psalm next

[1] "Ou, idoles."—*Fr. mary.* "Or, idols." The original word here is אֱלִילִים, *elilim.* See note 2, p. 50.

[2] "*Judah's daughters*, the inferior towns and villages of Judea, so called with reference to the metropolis, or mother city. This is a very elegant kind of personification, by which the subject, adjunct, accident, effect, or the like, of any thing or place is called the son, or, as in this instance, the daughter of that thing or place. Hence the Hebrew poets often introduce, as it were, on the stage, nations, countries, or kingdoms, clothed in the dress of women, and performing all the functions suited to such a character. The practice is familiar to our minds ; but probably it is so rendered by our habitual acquaintance with the Hebrew idiom, to which it appears to owe its origin."—*Mant on Psalm* xlviii. 11.

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to this, between the true God and the false gods which men form for themselves. This he does that the praise which he had ascribed might not be applied to any but the true God. Men are all ready to admit that they ought to celebrate the praises of God, but, naturally prone as they are to superstition, few indeed will be bound down to worship God in the manner which is right. No sooner have they to do with God than they deviate into the most baseless delusions. Each fashions a god for himself, and all choose what suits them best in the medley of inventions. This is the reason why the sacred writers, under the apprehension that men may turn to false gods, are careful in giving exhortations to the worship of God, to state at the same time who the true God is. The order observed by the Psalmist suggests the remark, that corrupt superstitions will never be removed until the true religion obtains. Prevented from coming to the true God by the slowness of their spiritual apprehension, men cannot fail to wander in vanities of their own; and it is the knowledge of the true God which dispels these, as the sun disperses the darkness. All have naturally a something of religion born with them,[1] but owing to the blindness and stupidity, as well as the weakness of our minds, the apprehension which we conceive of God is immediately depraved. Religion is thus the beginning of all superstitions, not in its own nature, but through the darkness which has settled down upon the minds of men, and which prevents them from distinguishing between idols and the true God. The truth of God is effectual when revealed in dispelling and dissipating superstitions. Does the sun absorb the vapours which intervene in the air, and shall not the presence of God himself be effectual much more? We need not wonder then that the Psalmist, in predicting the Kingdom of God, triumphs over the ungodly nations, which boasted in graven images, as when Isaiah, speaking of the rise of the Gospel, adds, "Then all the idols of Egypt shall fall," (Isa. xix. 1.) Since the knowledge of God has been hid from the view of men, we are taught also that there is no reason to be surprised at the

[1] "Les hommes ont naturellement quelque religion," &c.—*Fr.*

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host of superstitions which have overspread the world. We have an exemplification of the same truth in our own day. The knowledge of the true doctrine is extinguished amongst the Turks, the Jews, and Papists, and, as a necessary consequence, they lie immersed in error; for they cannot possibly return to a sound mind, or repent of their errors, when they are ignorant of the true God. When the Psalmist speaks of their being *confounded*, he means that the time was come when those who were given to idolatry should repent, and return to the worship of the true God. Not that all without exception would be brought to genuine repentance,—for experience has taught us in these our own times how atheistical men[1] will cast off superstition, and yet assume the most shameless effrontery,—but that this is one of those consequences which the knowledge of God should effect, the turning of men from their errors unto God. Some there are who obstinately resist God, of which we have many examples in the Papacy; but we have every reason to believe that they are secretly prostrated by that which they affect to despise, and confounded notwithstanding their opposition. What the Psalmist says a little after, *Let all the gods*[2] *worship before him,*

[1] "Lucianici homines."—*Lat.* "Disciples de Lucian et Atheistes."—*Fr.*

[2] With the exception of the Chaldee, which, instead of "gods," has "people," all the ancient versions translate *angels—all his angels*, as if the Hebrew reading had originally been כל מלאכיו, and not as in our present copies, כל אלהים. It has indeed been questioned whether אלהים, *elohim*, can be correctly translated *angels*. The most of modern lexicographers and critics reject this sense of the word. "But usage, after all," says Moses Stuart, "pleads in favour of it. The Septuagint render אל (*God*) by ἄγγελος, in Job xx. 15; and אלהים by ἄγγελοι, in Psalm viii. 6; xcvi. 7; cxxxvii. 1. Paul follows them by quoting Psalm viii. 6 in Heb. ii. 7; and also by quoting Psalm xcvii. 7 in Heb. i. 6; *i.e.*, supposing that he does actually quote it. Is not this sufficient evidence that there was a *usus loquendi* among the Jews, which applied the word אלהים occasionally to designate *angels*? It is admitted that kings and magistrates are called *elohim*, because of their rank or dignity. Is there any thing improbable in the supposition that angels may be also called אלהים, who at present are elevated above men, Heb. ii. 7?"

Stuart, in the above remarks, speaks as if it were doubtful whether Paul in Heb. i. 6, "And again, when he bringeth the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him," quotes from the 7th verse of the 97th Psalm. Commentators are divided in opinion on this point, some maintaining that the quotation is from Psalm xcvii., and others that it is from Deut. xxxii. 43, in the Septuagint version, where the very words are found which appear in Heb. i. 6, although *only* in that version; the Hebrew and all the ancient versions

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properly applies to the angels, in whom there shines forth some small portion of divinity, yet it may, though less appropriately, be extended to fictitious gods; as if he had said, Whatever is accounted or held as a god must quit its place and renounce its claims, that God alone may be exalted. Hence it may be gathered that the true definition of piety is, when the true God is perfectly served, and when he alone is so exalted, that no creature obscures his divinity; and, accordingly, if we would not have true piety entirely destroyed amongst us, we must hold by this principle, That no creature whatever be exalted by us beyond measure.

8. *Zion heard, and was glad.* In the former part of the psalm he had spoken of that joy which should be common to all the world. Now he makes special mention of God's chosen nation; and this partly, because they were to enjoy

being without them. One difficulty attending the supposition of his quoting from Deut. xxxii. 43 is, that the subject connected with this command to the angels (if we admit the clause in the Septuagint to be a part of the sacred text) has no relation to the Messiah. The context celebrates the victory over the enemies of Israel, which God will achieve. After saying that 'his arms should be drunk with blood, and that his sword should devour flesh with the blood of the slain and of captives, from the time when he begins to take vengeance on the enemy,' the Septuagint (not the Hebrew) immediately inserts, εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοὶ ἅμα αὐτῷ καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ. This in the place where it stands must mean, "Let the inhabitants of the heavenly world rejoice in the victory of God over the enemies of his people, and let them pay their adoration to him." But the Messiah does not seem to be at all alluded to any where in the context, much less described as being *introduced into the world.* It is not therefore very likely that this is the passage quoted, unless we suppose that Paul borrowed the words merely as fitted to express the idea which he intended to convey, without any reference to their original meaning. The probability is in favour of a quotation from the text before us; which in the Septuagint runs thus: προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ. Paul's words are, καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ παντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ. Here the variation from the Septuagint is so very inconsiderable, making no change upon the sense of the passage, that the discrepancy, especially when it is considered that very few of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New agree *verbatim* either with the Hebrew or Septuagint, is no argument against the supposition of the Apostle's quoting this text from that version which was in general use among the Jews. And this psalm admits of an easy application to the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, whose advent was to destroy idolatry, and be the source of rejoicing and happiness to all the righteous, which the passage in Deuteronomy referred to does not.—See *Stuart's Commentary on Heb.* i. 6, and *Excursus* vi.

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the first-fruits of this joy, and partly, because he would remove all occasion for rivalry or envy. Accordingly, having said that the Gentile nations should be brought to equal privileges with the posterity of Abraham, he adds, that the Jews would not suffer any diminution of honour by this co-partnership of privilege, but might rather reasonably rejoice in being chosen of God to be the fountain out of which the world was to be watered and refreshed. Those of whom the Psalmist speaks were the true children of Abraham and them only. They had a double reason for rejoicing, when God extended his government and glory from the rising to the setting sun; for, while he exhibited to them in Christ the complete fulfilment of that redemption which was promised, they, at the same time, saw the glory of God diffused from the narrow limits of Judea to all parts of the world. When the nations were blessed in the seed of Abraham, agreeably to the prediction which had gone before, this was no inconsiderable confirmation of their faith, as also, when they saw a religion which had been hated and despised universally embraced. But why, it may be asked, does he speak of those things being *heard*, rather than *seen?* Two reasons may be given for this. First, he would have God's believing people anticipate the blessing by hope, ere the consummation of it arrived; and, again, the language intimates, that the glory of the Gospel would be spread to such distant quarters, that the Jews would rather hear of it by report, than witness it with their own eyes.

9. *For thou, Jehovah, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.*
10. *Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his meek ones; he will deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.*
11. *Light has been sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.*
12. *Rejoice in Jehovah, ye righteous, and celebrate the memory of his holiness.*

9. *For thou, Jehovah, art high above all the earth.* Having already, in another place, explained these words, I shall not

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say more at present upon them. Only it is to be noticed, that there is a comparison drawn between God and the angels, and whatever has any claim to eminence. The Psalmist limits all other excellency in such a manner, as to leave no room for questioning that all majesty is comprehended in God only. This was the case more eminently when God manifested himself in his only-begotten Son, who is the express image of himself. Before that period his greatness was less apparent, because he was less known.

10. *Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil.* Those that fear God are here enjoined to practise righteousness, as Paul says, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," (2 Tim. ii. 19.) He shows from the very nature of God, that we cannot be judged and acknowledged to be his servants unless we depart from sin, and practise holiness. God is in himself the fountain of righteousness, and he must necessarily hate all iniquity, unless we could suppose that he should deny himself; and we have fellowship with him only on the terms of separation from unrighteousness. As the persecution of the wicked is apt to provoke us to seek revenge, and unwarrantable methods of escape, the Psalmist guards us against this temptation, by asserting that God is the keeper and protector of his people. If persuaded of being under the Divine guardianship, we will not strive with the wicked, nor retaliate injury upon those who have wronged us, but commit our safety to him who will faithfully defend it. This gracious act of condescension, by which God takes us under his care, should serve as a check to any impatience we might feel in abstaining from what is evil,[1] and preserving the course of integrity under provocation.

11. *Light has been sown for the righteous.* He confirms the truth just advanced, and anticipates an objection which might be brought against it. We have seen that the Lord's people are often treated with the utmost cruelty and injus-

[1] "De nous tenir en bride, de peur qu'il ne nous soit fascheux ou grief de nous abstenir de malice," &c.—*Fr.*

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tice, and would seem to be abandoned to the fury of their enemies. The Psalmist reminds us for our encouragement that God, even when he does not immediately deliver his children, upholds them by his secret power.[1] In the first clause of the verse there is a double metaphor. By *light* is meant joy, or a prosperous issue, (according to a phraseology which is common in Scripture,) as darkness denotes adversity. The latter metaphor of *sowing* is rather more difficult to understand.[2] Some think that gladness is sown for the just, as seed which, when cast into the ground, dies or lies buried in the earth a considerable time before it germinates. This idea may be a good one; but, perhaps, the simplest meaning of the words is the following, that though the righteous may be almost banished out of the world, and unable to venture themselves forth in public, and hidden from view, God will spread abroad their joy like seed, or bring forth to notice the light of their joy which had been shut up. The second clause of the verse is an exegesis of the first—*light* being interpreted to mean *joy*, and *the righteous* such as are *upright in heart*. This definition of righteousness is worthy of notice, That it does not consist in a mere outward appearance, but comprehends integrity of heart, more being required to constitute us righteous in God's sight than that we simply keep our tongue, hands, or feet, from wickedness. In the concluding verse he exhorts the Lord's people to gratitude, that looking upon God as their Redeemer, they should lead a life correspond-

[1] "Quamvis non statim suos liberet Deus, arcana tamen virtute tueri eorum salutem."—*Lat.*

[2] Walford objects to the version *light is sown*, on the ground that it presents an incongruous combination of figures; and he translates, "light is diffused." "Who can say," he remarks, "what is meant by the sowing of light? The diffusion or expansion of light is intelligible, and means that though good men may be in darkness or adversity, light and prosperity will burst through the cloud." The Septuagint, Vulgate, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions translate, "light *is risen* for the righteous," probably reading זרח, *zarach*, which De Rossi found in one manuscript, instead of זרע, *zara*. Houbigant and others adopt this reading, conceiving it to be more agreeable to the common idea of light. But Muis vindicates the text from Psalm cxxvi. 5; and Archbishop Secker thinks "sown" a very proper expression. In support of the same rendering, Merrick, in his Annotations, quotes several passages from the classic Greek authors, in which both light and gladness are said to be sown.

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ing to the mercy they have received, and rest contented under all the evils they encounter, with the consciousness that they enjoy his protection.

PSALM XCVIII.

This psalm has a great resemblance to the ninety-sixth, not only in matter, but language. The great scope of it is to show that the glory of God would be illustriously displayed in the spread of the knowledge of his name throughout the world, both from the more ample fulfilment which would be given upon the manifestation of the Saviour, to the promises made to the posterity of Abraham, and from the sudden extension of salvation to all parts of the earth. He calls upon men to magnify the name of God on this account.

¶ A Psalm.

1. *Sing unto Jehovah a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his own right hand, and the arm of his holiness, hath gotten him the victory.*[1]
2. *Jehovah hath made known his salvation: his righteousness he hath revealed in the sight of the heathen.*
3. *He hath remembered his goodness and truth towards the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*[2]

1. *Sing unto Jehovah a new song.* I have already remarked, that the expression here used denotes an extraordinary, not a common, ascription of praise. This appears from the reason assigned for it, That God had manifested his salvation in a singu-

[1] The last clause is "literally, *have wrought deliverance for him, i.e.*, not deliverance of him, as if God had been himself in danger or distress; but that is done *for* any one, which is done agreeably to his wishes and intentions, and at his instigation. The original, therefore, expresses, that the deliverance wrought was originally designed and decreed by God, and that his immediate power effected the thing intended without any other aid."—*Horsley.* Street translates, "hath wrought salvation for us." He thinks that instead of לוֹ, *for him*, we should read לָנוּ, *for us.*

[2] The last part of this verse is in the same words with Isaiah lii. 10.

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lar and incredible manner. For having spoken of *marvellous things*, he represents this as the sum of all, that God had procured salvation *with his own right hand*;[1] that is, not by human means, or in an ordinary way, but delivering his Church in an unprecedented manner. Isaiah enlarges upon this miracle of God's power: "The Lord looked if there were any to help, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness sustained him," (chap. lix. 16.) In both passages *the arm of God* stands opposed to ordinary means, which although when employed they derogate nothing from the glory of God, yet prevent us from so fully discovering his presence as we might otherwise do. The language of the Psalmist amounts to a declaration that God would not save the world by means of an ordinary kind, but would come forth himself and show that he was the author of a salvation in every respect so singular. He reasonably infers that mercy of such a wonderful, and, to us, incomprehensible kind, should be celebrated by no ordinary measures of praise. This is brought out still more clearly in the verse which follows, where it is said that his *salvation and righteousness are shown to the nations*. What could have been less looked for than that light should have arisen upon these dark and benighted places, and that righteousness should have appeared in the habitations of desperate wickedness? Salvation is mentioned first, although it is, properly speaking, the effect of righteousness. Such an inversion of the natural order is often observed in stating divine benefits; nor is it surprising that what is the means, and should be mentioned first, is sometimes set last, and follows by way of explanation. I may add, that the righteousness of God, which is the source of salvation, does not consist in his recompensing men according to their works, but is just the illustration of his mercy, grace, and faithfulness.

3. *He hath remembered his goodness.* Having spoken of the

[1] "Car apres avoir parlé des miracles, il les restreint specialement à une somme, asçavoir, que Dieu *s'est acquis salut par sa propre vertu.*"—*Fr.*

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general manifestation of his salvation, he now celebrates his goodness more particularly to his own chosen people. God exhibited himself as a Father to Gentiles as well as Jews; but to the Jews first, who were, so to speak, the first-born.[1] The glory of the Gentiles lay in their being adopted and ingrafted into the holy family of Abraham, and the salvation of the whole world sprung from the promise made to Abraham, as Christ said, "Salvation is of the Jews," (John iv. 22.) The Psalmist therefore very properly observes, that God in redeeming the world *remembered his truth*, which he had given to Israel his people—language, too, which implies that he was influenced by no other motive than that of faithfully performing what he had himself promised.[2] The more clearly to show that the promise was not grounded at all on the merit or righteousness of man, he mentions the *goodness* of God first, and afterwards his *faithfulness*, which stood connected with it. The cause, in short, was not to be found out of God himself, (to use a common expression,) but in his mere good pleasure, which had been testified long before to Abraham and his posterity. The word *remembered* is used in accommodation to man's apprehension; for what has been long suspended seems to have been forgotten. Upwards of two thousand years elapsed from the time of giving the promise to the appearance of Christ, and as the people of God were subjected to many afflictions and calamities, we need not wonder that they should have sighed, and given way to ominous fears regarding the fulfilment of this redemption. When it is added, *all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God*, this is not merely commendatory of the greatness of the salvation, meaning that it should be so illustrious that the report of it would reach the ends of the earth; but it signifies that the nations formerly immersed in delusions and superstitions would participate in it.

4. *Exult before Jehovah all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.*

1 "Afin qu'ils fussent comme les aisnez."—*Fr.*

2 "Qu'il n'a point este induit par autre raison, sinon afin que fidelement il accomplist ce qu'il avoit promis."—*Fr.*

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5. *Sing to Jehovah upon the harp, upon the harp, and with the voice of a psalm.*[1]
6. *With trumpets, and sound of the cornet, sing before Jehovah the King.*
7. *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and those who dwell therein.*[2]
8. *Let the floods clap their hands:*[3] *let the hills be joyful together,*
9. *Before Jehovah: for he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with uprightness.*

4. *Exult before Jehovah all the earth.* Here he repeats the exhortation with which he had begun, and by addressing it to the nations at large, he indicates that when God should break down the middle wall of partition all would be gathered to the common faith, and one Church formed throughout the

[1] Horsley reads—

"Chant unto Jehovah to the harp,
To the harp, and the sound of the zimrah."

"זמרה here," he remarks, "as in Psalm lxxxi. 2, is certainly the name of some musical instrument. But what the particular instrument might be, which went by that name, is quite uncertain. I therefore retain the Hebrew word."

[2] Street is of opinion that the nominative cases of the concluding part of this verse do not belong to the verb of the preceding clause, but to the verb in the subsequent verse. "Roar let the globe," says he, "'and those that inhabit it,' is not so proper an expression as 'Let the globe and those that inhabit it clap the hand.'"

[3] "Let the floods *clap their hands*," is a most beautiful prosopopœia, a figure for which the Hebrew poets are remarkable, and which they manage with equal elegance and boldness. Horsley renders, "Let the floods sound applause;" observing, that it is literally "clap their hands." "The verb רנן," he adds, "expresses the vibratory motion, either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lip. Therefore, when applied figuratively to an inanimate thing that can neither dance nor sing, it is better to render its general sense than to confine it to either particular image. Our language has no word, which, like the Hebrew, may express dancing or singing indiscriminately." The propriety of deviating from the literal rendering may, however, be questioned. This ode is highly animated; it is a burst of joy in God raised to the highest pitch; and it is the property of this emotion, when felt in a high degree, to express itself in the most daring and unusual figures. It may be added, that the whole of the seventh and eighth verses furnish a beautiful specimen of personification. With a sublimity of sentiment and an energy of language which cannot be surpassed, all nature, animate and inanimate, is summoned to unite in the song of joy, and to contend with eager rivalry in celebrating the praises of its Creator.

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whole world. When he speaks of musical instruments the allusion is evidently to the practice of the Church at that time, without any intention of binding down the Gentiles to the observance of the ceremonies of the law. The repetition made use of is emphatical, and implies that the most ardent attempts men might make to celebrate the great work of the world's redemption would fall short of the riches of the grace of God. This is brought out still more forcibly in what follows, where feeling is ascribed to things inanimate. The whole passage has been elsewhere expounded, and it is unnecessary to insist further upon it.

PSALM XCIX.

This psalm differs from those which precede it in one respect, that it speaks of the kingdom of God, and the blessings consequent upon it, as confined within Judea; and rather calls upon the posterity of Abraham, in distinction from the surrounding nations, to praise God for the privilege of their adoption.

1. *Jehovah reigns; let the people tremble: he dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved.*
2. *Jehovah is great in Zion; and he is high above all nations.*
3. *They shall acknowledge thy great and terrible name; it is holy.*
4. *The king's strength*[1] *also loves judgment; thou hast established equity, thou hast done judgment and righteousness in Jacob.*

[1] "*The king's strength* seems here put for the king himself."—*Merrick.* Street removes the original word for *strength* to the end of the preceding verse, reading *holy and mighty;* and renders the first part of this verse thus: "Thou art a king that lovest judgment;" observing, that in the Hebrew it is מלך, *meleck*, not המלך, *hamelech*, that the word אהב, *aheb*, *that lovest*, is a participle here, and that the pronoun אתה, *atah*, *thou*, belongs to the first clause. "According to the translation of the English Bible," says he, "there is a great want of connection. 'The king's strength also loveth judgment: thou dost establish equity,' &c. There had been no king spoken of before except Jehovah, and the Psalmist is here addressing him in the second person, not speaking of him in the third."

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1. *Jehovah reigns.* The people, who were formerly called upon to rejoice, are now commanded to tremble. For as the Jews were encompassed by enemies, it was of the utmost importance that God's power should be magnified among them, that they might know that, while under his guardianship, they would be constantly and completely safe from the hatred and fury of every foe. The Hebrew word רגז, *ragaz*, as we have elsewhere seen, sometimes signifies *to tremble*, at other times, *to be angry*, and, in short, denotes any strong emotion arising either from anger or fear.[1] Accordingly, the prophet here intends that God, in the emancipation of his chosen people, should give such a palpable display of his power, as would strike all the nations with dismay, and make them feel how madly they had rushed upon their own destruction. For it is with regard to men that God is said to reign, when he exalts himself by the magnificent displays which he gives of his power; because, while the aid which he gives to them remains invisible, unbelievers act a more presumptuous part, just as if there were no God.

2. *Jehovah in Zion.* It is proper that we should not for-

[1] רגז, *ragaz*, "denoting commotion either of the body or mind, imports in the latter acceptation particularly two things, *fear* and *anger*, those two principal emotions of the mind. In the sense of anger we have it in Gen. xlv. 24, where we render it *falling out* or *quarrelling*, and in 2 Kings xix. 27, 28, where we render it *rage*. So Prov. xxix. 9, and in Gen. xli. 10, the Hebrew קצף, (affirmed of Pharaoh, viz., that) *he was wroth*, is by the Chaldee rendered רגז. And this is much the more frequent acceptation of the word in the Old Testament."—*Hammond's note on Psalm* iv. 4. On the text before us, after observing that Abu Walid explains this root as signifying in the Arabic *trembling* and *commotion*, arising sometimes from anger, sometimes from fear, and other causes, the same critic says, "Here the context may seem to direct the taking it in the notion of commotion simply, as that signifies ἀκαταστασία, *sedition* or *tumult of rebels* or other adversaries. And then the sense will be thus: 'The Lord reigneth, let the people be moved,' *i. e.*, Now God hath set up David in his throne, and peaceably settled the kingdom in him, in spite of all the commotions of the people. The LXX. render it to this sense, as Ps. iv. 4, ὀργιζέσθωσαν λαοί, 'let the people be angry or regret it as much as they will.'" The verb here, and the concluding verb of the verse, may be read in the future tense: "The people *or* nations shall tremble, and the earth shall be moved," just as at the giving of the Law, "the people trembled," and "the earth shook." Thus the passage may be regarded as a prediction of the subjection of the heathen world to the dominion of Christ.

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get the antithesis I formerly mentioned, namely, that God is great in Zion to destroy and annihilate all the enemies of his Church; and that, when the Psalmist goes on to say, *he is high above all nations*, his meaning is, not that he presides over them to promote their welfare, but to disconcert their counsels, to baffle their designs, and to subvert all their power. That which immediately follows about the *praising of God's name*, refers not to the nations at large, but in my opinion to the faithful, from whom alone the prophet demands a tribute of gratitude. For although God compels his vanquished enemies to acknowledge him, yet as they do not cease from speaking against his glory, and blaspheming his holy name, it cannot be to them that the exhortation is addressed, *Praise the name of God, for it is holy;* but to the faithful, who, from their knowledge of God's holy name, very cordially engage in the celebration of its praises.

4. *The king's strength also loves judgment.* This may be viewed as a threatening designed to fill his enemies with dismay; as if he should say, such is God's regard for righteousness and equity, that he hath clothed himself with power to avenge the injuries which his enemies have done to him. I think it preferable, however, to apply it to the Church, because she is under the government of God for the express purpose[1] of practising righteousness and holiness. There is another interpretation which is by no means objectionable, namely, that which does not associate ideas of tyranny with the government of God, because there is constant concord between his power and justice. But when I consider the whole context, I have no doubt, that the prophet, after having introduced God as established upon his royal throne, now speaks of the manner in which he governs his kingdom; for he adds, *thou hast established equity* and righteousness. This clause is susceptible of two interpretations; either that God in his law has commanded his people to practise perfect equity, or that, in supporting and defending them, he has uniformly testified his great regard for his justice and equity.

[1] "A ceste condition."—*Fr.* "Upon condition."

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It is most true that the highest equity has always characterised the works and judgments of God, yet it appears more probable that it refers to that system, that form of government which God, who loves justice, appointed among the people of Israel, and which was the best rule for leading a life of honesty and integrity. And hence the word *to do* is improperly taken to signify *to order or command.* Should any one choose to consider this last clause as relating to God's government, I am by no means disposed to disagree with him. For there is nothing that more animates and encourages the faithful to render obedience to God, or inspires them with greater zeal to observe his law, than to find in this course of action that they are the objects of his paternal care, and that the righteousness, which he requires from his own people in words, is on his part reciprocated by kind deeds.

5. *Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his footstool; he*[1] *is holy.*
6. *Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those who call upon his name; they called upon Jehovah, and he answered them.*
7. *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:*[2] *they kept his testimonies, and the statute which he gave them.*

[1] The marginal translation in our English Bible is, *it is holy*, connecting *holy* with Jehovah's footstool, mentioned in the preceding clause. This construction appears to be very appropriate. The third, the fifth, and in effect the ninth verses, end with this expression, which seems to be a kind of chorus, and thus divides the psalm into three parts. The first part terminates with ascribing *holiness* to the *name* of Jehovah; the second with attributing the same property to his *abode;* and at the conclusion, holiness, essential, infinite, and immutable holiness, is ascribed to *Jehovah himself.*

[2] That God spoke to Moses and Aaron out of the cloudy pillar, there is no doubt. In Exod. xvi. 10, 11, we read, "And it came to pass as Aaron spoke unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying," &c. And when God said to Moses, Exod. xvii. 6, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb," the meaning undoubtedly is, that the cloudy pillar, from which he was to speak, would stand upon Horeb. See also Exod. xix. 9, 18, 19. To this intercourse Aaron as well as Moses was admitted, as we learn from the 24th verse of that chapter, and from chap. xx. 21, 22. The only difficulty here is, how God can be said to have spoken to Samuel out of the cloudy pillar, of which

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8. *O Jehovah our God, thou didst answer them: thou wast a God that wast favourable to them, though thou didst take vengeance upon their inventions.*
9. *Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for Jehovah our God is holy.*

5. *Exalt Jehovah our God.* This exhortation is properly addressed to the Church alone, because having been made a partaker of the grace of God, she ought the more zealously to devote herself to his service, and to the love of godliness. The Psalmist, therefore, calls upon the Jews to exalt that God from whom they had received such manifest help, and enjoins them to render that worship appointed in his Law. The temple indeed is frequently in other places denominated *God's seat, or house,* or rest, or dwelling-place; here it is called his footstool, and for the use of this metaphor, there is the best of all reasons. For God desired to dwell in the midst of his people in such a manner, as not only to direct their thoughts to the outward temple and to the ark of the covenant, but rather to elevate them to things above. Hence the term house or dwelling-place tended to impart courage and confidence to them, that all the faithful might have boldness to draw near unto God freely, whom they beheld coming to meet them of his own accord.

But as the minds of men are prone to superstition, it was necessary to check this propensity, lest they should associate with their notions of God things fleshly and earth-

we have no particular account in his history. To this it may be answered, that when God called upon Samuel four times successively, at the fourth time he "came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel," (verse 10,) which seems parallel to those words of God to Moses, Exod. xvii. 6, "I will stand before thee upon the rock," and may, therefore, be presumed to mean that the cloud, the usual emblem of the Divine presence under the former dispensation, came and stood before Samuel, and that God spake from it, though it is evident that at the three preceding calls it did not appear. Again, when Samuel's offerings and prayers were so signally heard at Mizpeh, 1 Sam. vii., it is said, verse 9, "The Lord answered him," and verse 10, "The Lord thundered with a great thunder;" and as where thunder is, a cloud is supposed to exist, this answering of Samuel with thunder may not unreasonably be supposed to denote God's speaking to him at this time also out of the cloud.

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—to the period prior to the publication of the law, it is certain that Moses was then invested with the high priest's office. The design of the prophet must also be kept in mind, namely, that God not only adopted the seed of Abraham, but set apart some of them to act as mediators, whom he enjoined to call upon his name, in order that his covenant might be the more confirmed. For the *invocation* of which he speaks must not be understood indiscriminately of every manner of *calling upon*, but only of that which belongs to the priests, who were chosen by God, as intercessors to appear in his presence in the name of all the people, and to speak on their behalf.

They called upon Jehovah. The Psalmist explains more fully what I have just now said, that God from the very first, and with a special reference to his gracious covenant, bestowed great benefits upon the descendants of Abraham—the Jews. And, therefore, as often as they experienced the loving-kindness of God, it behoved them to call to mind his former loving-kindness. The prophet, too, makes particular mention of the visible symbol of *the cloudy pillar*, by which God designed to testify in all ages that his presence was ever with his people, according as he employed temporal signs, not only for their benefit to whom they were exhibited, but also for the benefit of those who were to succeed them. Not that God always showed a cloudy pillar to his ancient people, but considering that the dulness of men is so great, that they do not perceive the presence of God unless they are put in mind by external signs, the prophet very properly reminds

cal officers. Hence, in Exod. ii. 16, for the Hebrew term כהן, the Chaldee has רבא, "*the Prince* of Midian." And in 2 Sam. viii. 18, it is said of David's sons, that they were כהנים, which does not there mean *priests*, but *princes* or *chief rulers*;—רברבין, *great men*, as the Chaldee has it, or הראשונים, "*principal* or *chief men* about the king," as they are termed in 1 Chron. xviii. 17. Of this sort was Ira the Jairite, who, in 2 Sam. xx. 26, is called כהן, which does not there denote *priest*, but a *chief ruler* about David. Thus, as in the more general sense of the word, it comprehends civil as well as ecclesiastical rulers, it is evident that Moses, no less than Aaron, may be reckoned בכהנין, *among God's rulers* or *chief men*; and, as Calvin states, it is to be noticed that Moses was, properly speaking, the Priest of the Israelites before the appointment of Aaron and his family to the sacerdotal office.

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the Jews of this memorable token. And as God had appeared openly in the desert to their fathers, so their posterity might be well assured that he would also be near to them. He adds, that they *had kept God's testimonies*, for the purpose of enforcing the duty of like obedience upon succeeding generations.

8. *O Jehovah our God.* The prophet here reminds them that God had heard their prayers because his grace and their piety harmonised. Consequently, encouraged by their exemplary success in prayer, their posterity ought to call upon God, not merely pronouncing his name with their lips, but keeping his covenant with all their heart. He farther reminds us that if God does not display his glory so bountifully, and so profusely in every age, the fault is with men themselves, whose posterity have either utterly forsaken, or greatly declined from the faith of the fathers. It is not to be wondered at that God should withdraw his hand, or at least not stretch it forth in any remarkable way, when he beholds piety waxing cold on the earth.

O God, thou hast been propitious to them.[1] From these words

[1] Hammond translates, "O God, thou was propitiated for their sakes." He observes, that לָהֶם, *lahem*, which Calvin renders *to them*, is not to be understood barely in the sense of the dative case, "thou wast propitiated to them," or "forgavest them;" but means *for them*, that is, *for their sakes:* God sparing the people, for or on account of the prayers of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. God did not destroy them when these holy and devoted men pleaded with him in their behalf; he spared them, and drew back the hand of vengeance in answer to prayer. Such was the effect of Moses' intercessions. When the people caused Aaron to make the golden calf and worshipped it, God's anger was kindled against them. And he said to Moses, "Now therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." Had Moses let God alone, the whole of that race would have been utterly consumed. But he pleaded with God in their behalf, and "the Lord repented him of the evil which he thought to do unto the people," Exod. xxii. 10-15. Nor was Aaron less prevalent in turning away the anger of God from the rebellious Israelites, as is evident from Num. xvi. 43-45. When, on the occasion of the rebellion and murmuring of the people at Moses and Aaron on account of what befell Korah and his company, God said to Moses, "Get thee up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment;" Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces," and prayed. Then it follows, verse 46, "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar; and put on incense, and go quickly unto the

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it is quite obvious that what the Psalmist had formerly said concerning Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, refers to the whole people; for surely they did not officiate as priests merely for their own benefit, but for the common benefit of all the Israelites. Hence the transition is more natural which he makes from these three to the remaining body of the people. For I neither restrict the relatives to these three persons, nor do I interpret them exclusively of the same, but I rather think that the state of the whole Church is pointed out; namely, that while God, at the prayers of the priests, was propitious to the Jews, he, at the same time, sharply punished them for their sins. For on the one hand, the prophet magnifies the grace of God in that he had treated the people so kindly, and had so mercifully forgiven their iniquity; on the other hand, he specifies those awful examples of punishment by which he punished them for their ingratitude, that their descendants might learn to submit themselves dutifully to him. For it must not be forgotten, that by how much God deals graciously with us, by so much will he the less easily endure that we should treat his liberality with scorn.

In the close of the psalm he repeats the same sentence which we had in the fifth verse, only substituting *his holy mountain* instead of *his footstool;* and as for the sake of brevity he had formerly said somewhat obscurely קדוש הוא, *kadosh hu, he is holy*, he now says more plainly, *Jehovah our God is holy*. His intention is to show that God is not to be worshipped by the Israelites at random, (as the religion of the heathen depended upon fancy alone,) but that his worship is founded upon the assurance of faith.

congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." Equally successful were the intercessions of Samuel. When the Israelites were sore pressed by the Philistines, and afraid of them, they "said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." Samuel did as they desired, and God was propitiated by his prayers: "Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him." —1 Sam. vii. 7, 8, 9.

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PSALM C.

The title of this psalm may serve for a summary of its contents. Moreover, its brevity renders a lengthened discourse unnecessary. The Psalmist, in an especial manner, invites believers to praise God, because he has chosen them to be his people, and has taken them under his care.

¶ A Psalm of Praise.

1. *Let all the earth make a joyful noise to Jehovah.*
2. *Serve Jehovah with gladness: come into his presence with joyfulness.*
3. *Know ye that Jehovah himself is God: he made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

1. *Make a joyful noise.* The Psalmist refers only to that part of the service of God which consists in recounting his benefits and giving thanks. And since he invites the whole of the inhabitants of the earth indiscriminately to praise Jehovah, he seems, in the spirit of prophecy, to refer to the period when the Church would be gathered out of different nations. Hence he commands (verse 2) that God should be *served with gladness*, intimating that his kindness towards his own people is so great as to furnish them with abundant ground for rejoicing. This is better expressed in the third verse, in which he first reprehends the presumption of those men who had wickedly revolted from the true God, both in fashioning for themselves gods many, and in devising various forms of worshipping them. And as a multitude of gods destroys and suppresses the true knowledge of one God only, and tarnishes his glory, the prophet, with great propriety, calls upon all men to bethink themselves, and to cease from robbing God of the honour due to his name; and, at the same time, inveighs against their folly in that, not content with the one God, they were

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become vain in their imaginations. For, however much they are constrained to confess with the mouth that there is a God, the maker of heaven and earth, yet they are ever and anon gradually despoiling him of his glory; and in this manner, the Godhead is, to the utmost extent of their power, reduced to a nonentity. As it is then a most difficult thing to retain men in the practice of the pure worship of God, the prophet, not without reason, recalls the world from its accustomed vanity, and commands them to recognise God as God. For we must attend to this short definition of the knowledge of him, namely, that his glory be preserved unimpaired, and that no deity be opposed to him that might obscure the glory of his name. True, indeed, in the Papacy, God still retains his name, but as his glory is not comprehended in the mere letters of his name, it is certain that there he is not recognised as God. Know, therefore, that the true worship of God cannot be preserved in all its integrity until the base profanation of his glory, which is the inseparable attendant of superstition, be completely reformed.

The prophet next makes mention of the great benefits received from God, and, in an especial manner, desires the faithful to meditate upon them. To say *God made us* is a very generally acknowledged truth; but not to advert to the ingratitude so usual among men, that scarcely one among a hundred seriously acknowledges that he holds his existence from God, although, when hardly put to it, they do not deny that they were created out of nothing; yet every man makes a god of himself, and virtually worships himself, when he ascribes to his own power what God declares belongs to him alone. Moreover, it must be remembered that the prophet is not here speaking of creation in general, (as I have formerly said,) but of that spiritual regeneration by which he creates anew his image in his elect. Believers are the persons whom the prophet here declares to be God's workmanship, not that they were made men in their mother's womb, but in that sense in which Paul, in Eph. ii. 10, calls them, Τὸ ποιημα, *the workmanship* of God, because they are created unto good works which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them; and in reality this agrees best with the subsequent con-

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text. For when he says, *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture*, he evidently refers to that distinguishing grace which led God to set apart his children for his heritage, in order that he may, as it were, nourish them under his wings, which is a much greater privilege than that of merely being born men. Should any person be disposed to boast that he has of himself become a new man, who is there that would not hold in abhorrence such a base attempt to rob God of that which belongs to him? Nor must we attribute this spiritual birth to our earthly parents, as if by their own power they begat us; for what could a corrupt seed produce? Still the majority of men do not hesitate to claim for themselves all the praise of the spiritual life. Else what mean the preachers of free-will, unless it be to tell us that by our own endeavours we have, from being sons of Adam, become the sons of God? In opposition to this, the prophet in calling us the *people of God*, informs us that it is of his own good will that we are spiritually regenerated. And by denominating us *the sheep of his pasture*, he gives us to know that through the same grace which has once been imparted to us, we continue safe and unimpaired until the end. It might be otherwise rendered, *he made us his people*, &c.[1] But as the meaning is not altered, I have retained that which was the more generally received reading.

4. *Enter into his gates with praise, and into his courts with rejoicing: give glory*[2] *to him, and bless his name.*
5. *Because Jehovah is good, his mercy endureth for ever, and his truth from generation to generation.*

4. *Enter his gates.* The conclusion of the psalm is almost the same as the beginning of it, excepting that he adopts a

[1] The Hebrew text has a keri, which is וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ, "and we are his," instead of וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ, "and not ourselves." The Septuagint supports the latter reading, the ketib, καὶ οὐχ ἡμεῖς, "and not we ourselves;" in which it is followed by the Syriac and Vulgate versions. Jerome agrees with the keri, *Ipse fecit nos, et ipsius sumus;* and so does the Chaldee. "I am persuaded," says Lowth, in Merrick's Annotations, "that the Masoretical correction, וְלוֹ, (and we are *his*,) is right: the construction and parallelism both favour it."

[2] "Donnez-luy gloire."—*Fr.*

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mode of speech which relates to the worship of God which obtained under the law;[1] in which, however, he merely reminds us that believers, in rendering thanks to God, do not discharge their duty aright, unless they also continue in the practice of a steady profession of piety. Meanwhile, under the name of the temple, he signifies that God cannot be otherwise worshipped than in strict accordance with the manner prescribed in his law. And, besides, he adds, that *God's mercy endureth for ever*, and that *his truth also is everlasting*, to point out to us that we can never be at a loss for constant cause of praising him. If, then, God never ceases to deal with us in this manner, it would argue the basest ingratitude on our part, if we wearied in rendering to Him the tribute of praise to which he is entitled. We have elsewhere taken notice of the reason why truth is connected with mercy. For so foolish are we, that we scarcely feel the mercy of God while he openly manifests it, not even in the most palpable displays of it, until he open his holy lips to declare his paternal regard for us.

PSALM CI.

David was not as yet put in possession of the kingdom, but having been already created king by the appointment of God, he prepares himself for exercising the government in the best manner. And he not only stirs up himself to perform faithfully the duties of his kingly office by devoutly meditating on this subject, but also engages by a solemn vow to be God's faithful servant, in order to induce Him to put him speedily in possession of the kingdom.

A Psalm of David.

1. *I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto thee, O Jehovah! will I sing psalms.*

[1] "Sinon qu'il mesle des maniers de parler, qui se rapportent au service de Dieu qui estoit sous la Loy."—*Fr.*

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2. *I will behave myself prudently in a perfect way, till thou comest to me :*[1] *I will walk in the integrity of my heart in the midst of my house.*
3. *I will not set a wicked thing before my eyes : I hate the work*[2] *of those who turn aside ; it shall not adhere to me.*
4. *The perverse heart shall depart from me : I will not know evil.*[3]
5. *Whoso slandereth his neighbour in secret, him will I destroy : the man whose eyes are lofty, and whose heart is wide, I cannot endure.*

1. *I will sing of mercy and of judgment.* What David here says concerning singing must be understood by the reader as intimating that this psalm contains the substance of his meditations with himself, as to what kind of king he would be whenever he should be put in possession of the sovereign power which had been promised him. *To sing* therefore *of mercy and of judgment,* is equivalent to declaring in solemn terms, that he would be a just and an upright king. Augustine understands this as meaning that God is to be praised, whether he punish men with severity, or whether he show himself merciful to them ; but this interpretation is too refined. David does not speak of God's secret judgments, but of the due administration of the kingdom, that he might both by words and deeds fulfil his vocation. When he asserts, *Unto thee, O Jehovah ! will I sing psalms,* he acknowledges that it was by the favour of God that he was appointed to so distinguished and honourable an office ; for it would have been an act of presumptuous rashness for him to have thrust himself into it, at the mere impulse of his own mind. He very properly comprehends all princely virtues under these two particulars, *mercy and judgment ;* for as it is the principal duty of a king to yield to every man his own right, so he is also required to possess a considerate love and compassion towards his subjects. Solomon therefore justly

[1] " Ou, quand viendras-tu à moy ?"—*Fr. marg.* " Or, when wilt thou come to me ?"
[2] " *Toute* œuvre."—*Fr.* " *All* the work."
[3] " Ou, le mauvais."—*Fr. marg.* " Or, the evil man."

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says, (Prov. xvi. 12,) "The throne is established by righteousness."

2. *I will behave myself prudently in a perfect way.* David here shows that he carefully considered how weighty a charge was laid upon him when he was made king. We know, and it is a truth taught us by experience, that almost all kings are intoxicated with the splendours of royalty; and the proverb was not used without foundation in ancient times, "A king must be born either a king or a fool." It is indeed a mistake to say that kings are born fools. Men were led to speak in this manner, because it commonly happens that those who are invested with the government of kingdoms and empires are fools and blockheads. And surely it is a remarkable instance of the vengeance of God, that beasts, and such as are altogether unworthy to be numbered among men, commonly possess the highest authority. But although kings are not born fools, yet they are so blinded by their dignity, that they think themselves in no respect indebted to their subjects, become arrogant and haughty in their carriage, recklessly plunge into their pleasures, and at length utterly forget themselves. David therefore says, *I will behave myself prudently*, or, which amounts to the same thing, I will look warily to myself; it being a rare virtue for the man who may do as he pleases to exercise such moderation, as not to allow himself liberty in any degree to do evil. He then who is exalted to sovereign power, and yet, instead of attempting to go as far as he can in doing mischief, restrains himself by self-control, is endued with true understanding. In short, David protests that he will not be like other kings who are infatuated by their own dignity; but that according to the greatness of the charge imposed upon him, he would endeavour wisely to perform his duty. It is to be observed, that he represents wisdom as consisting *in a perfect way*, or in uprightness. From this we learn that tyrants who employ their talents in forming wicked devices, and who are daily contriving new methods for burdening and oppressing their subjects; in short, who are ingenious only in doing mischief, are not wise towards God. Many persons, it is true, dis-

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like such craftiness; but still, it is undeniable that, if kings are intent upon enlarging the boundaries of their kingdom, and are masters in refined policy for accomplishing such a purpose, this is accounted the most perfect wisdom which they can possess, and is extolled to the skies. David, on the contrary, covets no other wisdom but that which is the mistress of integrity. *Till thou comest to me.* These words may be read in two ways. Some translate them interrogatively, *When wilt thou come?* as if David besought God not to subject him to any longer delay. And truly he had just ground to groan and lament, when he saw himself so long oppressed with poverty, and driven from place to place a wretched exile. It had been better for him to have lived obscure and unnoticed in his father's cottage, following his former occupation as a shepherd, than to be anointed king, that, being driven out of his country, he might live in utter dishonour and hatred. But I prefer reading the sentence without interrogation, *until* or *when thou comest;* and yet even this I interpret somewhat differently from the majority of commentators, understanding it to mean, that although David still continued in the condition of a private person, and did not enjoy the royal power which had been promised him, he nevertheless did not cease in the meantime to follow after uprightness. Thus he sets *the midst of his house* in opposition to palaces and public buildings; as if he had said, Within my private house or in my family.

3. *I will not set a wicked thing before my eyes.* After having protested, that in leading a private life, he would practise virtue and righteousness, even as it becomes good princes to begin with this, he now adds, that in executing the office of prince, he will be the enemy of all injustice and wickedness. *To set a wicked thing before one's eyes,* is equivalent to purposing to do something that is wicked. He therefore declares, that he will turn away from all wickedness; and it is certain, that no man can be a just and an impartial punisher of wrongdoing, but he who abhors it with all his heart. Whence it follows that kings, in order to the performance of their duty, must keep themselves entirely free from all consent to

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wickedness. Some join to the first sentence the word עשוה, *asoh*, which we translate *work*, and supply the letter ל, *lamed*; as if it had been said, I will not set before my eyes any wickedness to do it, or, nothing wicked will be acceptable to me to execute it. But the other sense is more probable, which is, that David, after having declared that he will not suffer any iniquity before his eyes, immediately adds for the sake of confirmation, that he will be an enemy to all injustice. If the last clause is referred to the persons who turn aside, there is a change of the number. It may, however, be explained of the work itself, implying that he would never have any share in wicked defections from the path of rectitude.

4. *The perverse heart shall depart from me.* Some by *perverse heart* understand perfidious men; but this I reject as a sense too forced, and it is moreover inconsistent with the context. As David has added in the second clause by way of exposition, *I will not know evil*, he doubtless in the first protests that he will be free from all perfidiousness and wickedness. The amount is, that he will do his endeavour to keep himself from all wrong-doing, and that he will not even know what it is to do wrong to his neighbours.

5. *Whoso slandereth his neighbour*[1] *in secret, him will I destroy.* In this verse he speaks more distinctly of the duty of a king who is armed with the sword, for the purpose of restraining evil-doers. Detraction, pride, and vices of every description, are justly offensive to all good men; but all men have not the power or right to cut off the proud or detractors, because they are not invested with public au-

[1] The reading of the Chaldee is striking, "He who speaks with *a triple tongue*," "*i.e.*," says Bythner, "*an informer, calumniator, detractor*, who injures three souls, his own, his hearers, and the calumniated; he inflicts a deep wound on his own conscience, puts a lie into the mouth of his hearer, and injures the subject of his slander; according to which, Herodotus has said, Διαβολή ἐστι δεινότατον ἐν τῇ δύο μέν εἰσιν οἱ ἀδικέοντες, εἷς δὲ ὁ ἀδικεόμενος. 'Calumny is most iniquitous, in which there are two injuring and one injured.'" The word מלושני, *meloshni*, rendered *slandereth*, is from the noun לשון, *lashon*, *the tongue*. In Ps. cxl. 12, it is said, "Let not איש לשון, *ish lashon*, *a man of tongue*, (*i.e.*, a slanderer,) be established in the earth."

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thority, and consequently have their hands bound. It is of importance to attend to this distinction, that the children of God may keep themselves within the bounds of moderation, and that none may pass beyond the province of his own calling. It is certain, that so long as David lived merely in the rank of a private member of society, he never dared to attempt any such thing. But after being placed on the royal throne, he received a sword from the hand of God, which he employed in punishing evil deeds. He particularises certain kinds of wickedness, that under one species, by the figure synecdoche, he might intimate his determination to punish all sorts of wickedness. To detract from the reputation of another privily, and by stealth, is a plague exceedingly destructive. It is as if a man killed a fellow-creature from a place of ambush; or rather a calumniator, like one who administers poison to his unsuspecting victim, destroys men unawares. It is a sign of a perverse and treacherous disposition to wound the good name of another, when he has no opportunity of defending himself. This vice, which is too prevalent every where, while yet it ought not to be tolerated among men, David undertakes to punish.

He next characterises the proud by two forms of expression. He describes them as those whose *eyes are lofty*, not that all who are proud look with a lofty countenance, but because they commonly betray the superciliousness of their proud hearts by the loftiness of their countenance. He farther describes them as *wide*[1] *of heart*, because those who aspire after great things must necessarily be puffed up and swollen. They are never satisfied unless they swallow up the whole world. From this we learn that good order cannot exist, unless princes are sedulously on the watch to

[1] The Hebrew noun רחב, *rechab*, for *wide* or *large*, is derived from רחב, *rachab*, *dilatus est*. "Applied to the heart or soul, it denotes largeness of desires.—So Prov. xxviii. 25, 'He that is נפש רחב, large in soul;' where the LXX. fitly render רחב, by ἄπληστος, 'insatiable,' applying it either to wealth or honour, the insatiable desire of either or which (as there follows) 'stirs up strife.' And so here they have rendered it again ἀπλήστῳ καρδίᾳ, 'he that cannot be filled in the heart,' *i.e.*, the covetous or ambitious man. The Syriac reads, *wide* or *broad;* so the Jewish Arab, 'Him that is high of eyes, and wide of heart, I can have no patience with those two.'"—*Hammond.*

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repress pride, which necessarily draws after it and engenders outrage and cruelty, contemptuous language, rapine, and all kinds of ill treatment. Thus it would come to pass, that the simple and the peaceable would be at the mercy of the more powerful, did not the authority of princes interfere to curb the audacity of the latter. As it is the will of God that good and faithful kings should hold pride in detestation, this vice is unquestionably the object of his own hatred. What he therefore requires from his children is gentleness and meekness, for he is the declared enemy of all who strive to elevate themselves above their condition.

6. *My eyes are towards the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he who walketh in an upright way shall minister to me.*
7. *He who worketh* [or *practiseth*] *deceit shall not dwell in the midst of my house: he who speaketh falsehoods shall not abide in my sight.*
8. *Early*[1] *will I destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah.*

6. *My eyes are towards the faithful of the land.* David here lays down another virtue of a wise prince, when he affirms that it will be his care to make all *the faithful of the land* his intimate friends,—that he will avail himself of their good offices, and have as domestic servants such only as are distinguished for personal worth. Some understand the words, *that they may dwell with me,* in a general sense thus: I will not neglect the good and inoffensive, nor will I suffer them to be unjustly molested; but I will secure, that under my administration, they shall live in a state of peace and tranquillity.

[1] "Heb. aux matins." "Heb. at the mornings."—*Fr. marg.* Courts of judicature for the execution of public justice were wont to be held in the morning in ancient times, as they are still with us, or at least began then, and continued till the evening. Hugo Grotius and others think there is here an allusion to these courts. "To this," says Hammond, "most probably לבקרים in the plural, *in the mornings*, here refers, the season wherein David, as a judge entering the tribunal, *destroys* and *cuts* off the wicked doers. The former part of the psalm contains his resolution for choice of counsellors and officers of state, preferring the plain, honest, and not the subtlest contrivers; and this last for the execution of justice, discountenancing and judicially *cutting off all wicked men.*"

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But his meaning rather is, that he will exercise discretion and care, that, instead of taking persons into his service indiscriminately, he may wisely determine each man's character, so as to have those who live a life of strict integrity as his most intimate friends, and that he may intrust them with the offices of state. He speaks of the *faithful* in the first place, because, although a man may possess talents of a high order, yet if he is not devoted to fidelity and integrity, he will never rightly execute the office of a judge. This is worthy of special notice; for although a prince may be the best of men, yet if his servants and officers are not of a corresponding character, his subjects will experience hardly any advantage from his uncorrupted integrity. Servants are the hands of a prince, and whatever he determines for the good of his subjects they will wickedly overthrow it, provided they are avaricious, fraudulent, or rapacious. This has been more than sufficiently demonstrated by experience. The greater part of kings, indeed, passing over the good and the upright, or, which is worse, driving them away from them, purposely seek to have as servants those who are like themselves, and who may prove fit tools for their tyranny; yea, even good and well disposed princes often manifest so much indolence and irresolution as to suffer themselves to be governed by the worst counsels, and inconsiderately prostitute the offices of state by conferring them on the unworthy.

7. *He who worketh deceit shall not dwell in the midst of my house.* This verse may be explained of all magistrates to whose charge the exercise of public judgments is committed, as well as of household servants. But as David has just now spoken in general of all officers, he seems now to speak properly of those who are near the person of the king. When the chief counsellors of kings and other intimate acquaintances who have gained possession of their ears, are deceitful and crafty, this becomes the source of all corruptions; for by their example they encourage others in evil, lifting up as it were the banner of licentiousness. And it is impossible that he who does not maintain good order in his own house, can be a fit person for holding the government of a whole realm.

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The authority which cannot preserve its influence under the domestic roof is of little worth in state affairs.

8. *Early will I destroy all the wicked of the land.* The Psalmist at length concludes by asserting, that he will endeavour to the utmost of his power to purge the land from infamous and wicked persons. He affirms that he will do this *early;* for if princes are supine and slothful, they will never seasonably remedy the evils which exist. They must therefore oppose the beginnings of evil. The judge, however, must take care not to yield to the influence of anger, nor must he act precipitately and without consideration. The original word for *early* is in the plural number, (it being properly *at the mornings,*) which denotes unremitted exertion. It were not enough that a judge should punish the wicked sharply and severely in one or two instances: he must continue perseveringly in that duty. By this word is condemned the slothfulness of princes, when, upon seeing wicked men daringly break forth into the commission of crime, they connive at them from day to day, either through fear or an ill-regulated lenity. Let kings and magistrates then remember, that they are armed with the sword, that they may promptly and unflinchingly execute the judgments of God. David, it is true, could not purge the land from all defilements, however courageously he might have applied himself to the task. This he did not expect to be able to do. He only promises, that without respect of persons he will show himself an impartial judge, in cutting off all the wicked. Timidity oftens hinders judges from repressing with sufficient vigour the wicked when they exalt themselves. It is consequently necessary for them to be endued with a spirit of invincible fortitude, that relying upon Divine aid, they may perform the duties of the office with which they are invested. Moreover, ambition and favour sometimes render them pliant, so that they do not always punish offences alike, where this ought to be done. Hence we learn that the strictness, which is not carried to excess, is highly pleasing to God; and, on the other hand, that he does not approve of the cruel kindness which gives loose reins to the wicked; as, indeed, there cannot be a greater

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encouragement to sin than for offences to be allowed to pass unpunished. What Solomon says should therefore be remembered, (Prov. xvii. 15,) "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." What David adds, *That I may cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of God*, is also emphatic. If even heathen kings are commanded in common to punish crimes, David well knew that he was under obligations of a more sacred kind to do so, since the charge of the Church of God had been committed to him. And certainly if those who hold a situation so honourable do not exert themselves to the utmost of their power to remove all defilements, they are chargeable with polluting as much as in them lies the sanctuary of God; and they not only act unfaithfully towards men by betraying their welfare, but also commit high treason against God himself. Now as the kingdom of David was only a faint image of the kingdom of Christ, we ought to set Christ before our view; who, although he may bear with many hypocrites, yet as he will be the judge of the world, will at length call them all to an account, and separate the sheep from the goats. And if it seems to us that he tarries too long, we should think of that morning which will suddenly dawn, that all filthiness being purged away, true purity may shine forth.

PSALM CII.

This prayer seems to have been dictated to the faithful when they were languishing in captivity in Babylon. Sorrowful and humbled, they first bewail their afflictions. In the next place, they plead with God for the restoration of the holy city and temple. To encourage themselves to come before him in prayer with the greater confidence, they call to remembrance the Divine promises in reference to the happy renovation both of the kingdom and of the priesthood; and they not only assure themselves of deliverance from captivity, but also beseech God to bring kings and nations in subjection to himself. In the close

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of the psalm, after having interposed a brief complaint concerning their distressing and afflicted condition, they draw consolation from the eternity of God; for, in adopting his servants to a better hope, he has separated them from the common lot of men.

¶ A prayer for the afflicted, when he shall be shut up, and shall pour out his meditation before Jehovah.

Whoever of the prophets composed this psalm, it is certain that he dictated it to the faithful as a form of prayer for the re-establishment of the temple and the city. Some limit it to the time when, after the return of the Jews from Babylon, the building of the temple was hindered by the neighbouring nations; but with this I cannot agree. I am rather of opinion that the poem was written before the return of the people, when the time of their promised deliverance was just at hand; for then the prophets began to be more earnest in lifting up the hearts of the godly according to these words of Isaiah, (ch. xl. 1,) "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."[1] The design of the sacred poet was, not only to inspire the people with courage, but also to excite in them greater care about the welfare of the Church. The title of the psalm indicates the end and purpose which it was intended to serve. Those who translate the verbs in the past tense, *A prayer for the afflicted, when he was in distress, and poured out his meditation*,[2] seem to give an incorrect view of the mind of the prophet. He rather intended to relieve the sorrow of those whose hearts he saw depressed; as if he had said, Although you may be afflicted with angnish and despair, you must not on that account desist from prayer. Some translate the verb עטף, *ataph*, *when he shall hide himself*, and conceive that this is a metaphorical expression of the gesture of a man engaged in prayer, when, on account of his grief, unable to lift up his face, he, as it were, hides himself, and keeps his head wrapped up in his bosom. But there appears to me to be an elegant play upon the words, when the distresses of the mind, and its being *shut up*, are spoken of, on the one hand, and *the pouring out* of prayers on the

[1] "This plaintive poem was written by some pious exile towards the expiration of the seventy years of captivity during which the people of Israel were detained in Babylon. . . . . The author of the psalm had most probably been carried away captive in early youth. He had survived nearly to the end of the term, and now, worn with cares and anxieties, he was earnest with God that deliverance might speedily arrive, lest he should sink into the grave without revisiting the delightful scenes by which his imagination was enraptured, without witnessing the fulfilment of the hopes which the prophets of God had excited by the predictions which they had delivered relative to the returning prosperity of his beloved country."—*Walford.* Hammond thinks that the psalm was written by Nehemiah, after the return of Ezra with commission for rebuilding the temple. See Neh. i. 3, &c. Others ascribe it to Jeremiah or Daniel.

[2] "Sa plainte."—*Fr.* "His complaint."

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other; teaching us that, when we are so shut up by grief as to shun the light and presence of men, the gate is so far from being shut against our prayers, that then in truth is the most proper season for engaging in prayer, for it is a singular alleviation of our sorrows when we have opportunity freely to pour out our hearts before God. The verb שׂוח, *suach*, often denotes *to pray;* but, as it also signifies *to meditate*, the noun derived from it properly means, in this place, *meditation*. It is, moreover, to be observed that, by these words, the Psalmist admonishes the Israelites as to the frame of mind with which it became them to use this form of prayer at the throne of grace; as if he had said, that he prescribed it to those only who were distressed on account of the desolate condition of the Church.

1. *O Jehovah! hear my prayer, and let my cry come to thee.*
2. *Hide not thy face from me in the day of my affliction; incline thy ear to me: in the day when I cry make haste, answer me.*

1. *O Jehovah! hear my prayer.* This earnestness shows, again, that these words were not dictated to be pronounced by the careless and light-hearted, which could not have been done without grossly insulting God. In speaking thus, the captive Jews bear testimony to the severe and excruciating distress which they endured, and to the ardent desire to obtain some alleviation with which they were inflamed. No person could utter these words with the mouth without profaning the name of God, unless he were, at the same time, actuated by a sincere and earnest affection of heart. We ought particularly to attend to the circumstance already adverted to, that we are thus stirred up by the Holy Spirit to the duty of prayer in behalf of the common welfare of the Church. Whilst each man takes sufficient care of his own individual interests, there is scarcely one in a hundred affected as he ought to be with the calamities of the Church. We have, therefore, the more need of incitements, even as we see the prophet here endeavouring, by an accumulation of words, to correct our coldness and sloth. I admit that the heart ought to move and direct the tongue to prayer; but, as it often flags or performs its duty in a slow and sluggish manner, it requires to be aided by the tongue. There is here a reciprocal influence. As the heart,

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on the one hand, ought to go before the words, and frame them, so the tongue, on the other, aids and remedies the coldness and torpor of the heart. True believers may indeed often pray not only earnestly but also fervently, while yet not a single word proceeds from the mouth. There is, however, no doubt that by *crying* the prophet means the vehemence into which grief constrains us to break forth.

2. *Hide not thy face from me in the day of my affliction.* The prayer, that God would not hide his face, is far from being superfluous. As the people had been languishing in captivity for the space of nearly seventy years, it might seem that God had for ever turned away his favour from them. But they are, notwithstanding, commanded, in their extreme affliction, to have recourse to prayer as their only remedy. They affirm that they cry *in the day of their affliction*, not as hypocrites are accustomed to do, who utter their complaints in a tumultuous manner, but because they feel that they are then called upon by God to cry to him.

Make haste, answer me. Having elsewhere spoken more fully of these forms of expression, it may suffice, at present, briefly to observe, that when God permits us to lay open before him our infirmities without reserve, and patiently bears with our foolishness, he deals in a way of great tenderness towards us. To pour out our complaints before him after the manner of little children would certainly be to treat his Majesty with very little reverence, were it not that he has been pleased to allow us such freedom. I purposely make use of this illustration, that the weak, who are afraid to draw near to God, may understand that they are invited to him with such gentleness as that nothing may hinder them from familiarly and confidently approaching him.

3. *For my days are consumed like smoke,*[1] *and my bones are burnt up as a hearth.*[2]

[1] Hammond reads, "My days are consumed in the smoke." "The Syriac," says he, "read, *in smoke*, and so the sense will best bear, either *my days* or *time* of my life, כלו, *consume* and wither *in smoke*, as Psalm cxix. 83, *a bottle in the smoke*, afflictions have had the same effect on me

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4. *My heart is smitten and withered like grass, because I have forgotten to eat my bread.*
5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my flesh.*[1]
6. *I have become like a pelican*[2] *of the wilderness; I have become like an owl*[3] *of the deserts.*

as smoke on those things which are hung in it, dried me up, and deformed me: or perhaps כלו, *end* or *fail*, or consume in smoke, (as when any combustible matter is consumed, smoke is all that comes from it, and so it *ends* in that;) and to that the latter part of the verse may seem to incline it, 'And my bones, *or* members, *or* body, are burnt up,' that being all one with *consumed*."

[2] Hammond reads, "are burnt up as dry wood." "As for כמוקד, that is added," says he, "the interpreters differ in the understanding of it. The word coming from יקד, *accensus est*, may be either the place where the fire is, or the pot which is heated by the flame of the fire, or the wood which is set on fire. The Syriac seems to take it in the first notion, rendering it, 'my bones are grown white as the hearth,' for so the chimney or hearth doth with the fire constantly burning on it. The Chaldee reads, 'as one of the stones that is set under the pot *or* caldron.' But the LXX. read, ὡσεὶ φρύγιον, 'as dry wood,' and the Latin, *sicut cremium*, 'as dry combustible wood,' and that is most applicable to the matter in hand; the bones or members of the body, their being burnt up as dry wood denotes the speedy exhausting of the radical moisture, which soon ends in the consumption of the whole. And then the whole verse fitly accords, 'My days are withered away in the smoke,' or perhaps 'end in smoke, my bones are burnt up like dry wood.'"

[1] "Tienent à ma peau."—*Fr.* "Cleave to my skin." *Flesh* is more literal; but see Ps. cxix. 120, and Job xix. 20.

[2] The pelican is a bird of the desert, to which frequent allusion is made by the sacred writers. Its Hebrew name קאת, *kaäth*, literally means, *the vomiter*, being derived from the verb קוא, *ko*, *to vomit*. It has a large pouch, or bag, suspended from its bill and throat, which serves both as a repository for its food, and as a net for catching it. In feeding its young ones, whether this bag is loaded with water, or more solid food, it squeezes the contents of it into their mouths, by strongly compressing it upon its breast with its bill, an action which might well explain the origin of the name given to it by the Hebrews. It is a bird of solitary habits, and is said by Isidore to live "in the solitude of the river Nile:" indeed, it generally builds its nest in mossy, turfy places, in the islands of rivers or lakes, far from the abode of man. It is here described as living in the wilderness, a circumstance not inconsistent with its natural fondness for water; for lakes, as well as fountains, are to be found in the most desert parts. And although a water-fowl, it sometimes retires to a great distance from the water, where, in some remote and concealed situation, it may hatch its young with greater security. Its huge pouch, which is said to be capable of containing near the size of a man's head, seems to be given to it for the purpose of its being provided with a supply of food for itself and its young ones when at a distance from the water. Bochart thinks that קאת, *kaäth*, here means *the bittern*. His chief reason for this opinion is, that the Psalmist compares himself to the two birds specified, on account of his groaning, and that, therefore, both of them should have a mournful cry. But he finds that natural historians

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7. *I have watched, and have been like a sparrow which is alone upon the house-top.*[1]

3. *For my days are consumed like smoke.* These expressions are hyperbolical, but still they show how deeply the desolation of the Church ought to wound the hearts of the people of God. Let every man, therefore, carefully examine himself on this head. If we do not prefer the Church to all the other objects of our solicitude, we are unworthy of being accounted among her members. Whenever we meet with such forms of expression as these, let us remember that they reproach our

make no mention of this as a property of the pelican, whereas they all agree that the bittern, by inserting its bill in the mud of the marsh, or plunging it under water, utters a most disagreeable cry, like the roaring of a bull, or the sound of distant thunder. But the Psalmist may not so much compare his groaning to the plaintive cry of these birds, as compare his situation to their solitary condition. Sorrow, when pungent, drives the sufferer to solitude, and, on this occasion, the inspired bard, under the overwhelming pressure of grief, seems to have become weary of society, and, like the pelican, or the owl, to have contracted a relish for deep retirement. *Shaw's Travels*, vol. ii. p. 302; *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture*, vol. ii. pp. 247-250.

[2] The *owl*, it is highly probable, is the bird here intended. The original word כוס, *kos*, which is evidently derived from the verb כסה, *kasah*, *to hide*, is applied, with much propriety, to denote that bird, which constantly hides itself in the day-time, and comes abroad only in the evening, or at night. כוס, *kos*, is followed in construction by חרבות, *charaboth*, which comes from חרב, *charab*, *to be destroyed*, or *laid waste*, (Isa. lx. 12; Jer. xxvi. 8; Zeph. iii. 6,) and signifies a waste or desolate place, as the ruins of an uninhabited house. The proper translation, then, should be, not *the owl of the desert*, but *the owl of the desolate* or *ruined buildings*, which exactly corresponds with the habits of this bird; for such ruinous places, as is well known, are its ordinary haunt, where, in undisturbed solitude, it may utter its melancholy howlings. The allusion in Gray's celebrated Elegy may illustrate the language of the text,—

> "Save that from yonder ivy mantled tower,
> The moping owl does to the night complain," &c.

The habit of the owl in shunning the light of day, and delighting in solitude, well describes the sensitiveness with which the Psalmist, through the greatness of his grief, shrunk from society, and courted seclusion. Bochart contends that כוס here signifies, not *the owl*, but *the ostrich*, and, if the Psalmist is comparing himself to the two birds specified, on account of his groaning, this seems to favour that translation; for the female ostrich has a most dismal and mournful voice, very much resembling the lamentation of a human being in deep distress. But, as has been before observed, the Psalmist seems to refer, not so much to the mournful voice of these birds, as to their solitary condition.

[1] There is here a reference to the flat roof of the eastern houses, a usual place of retirement, in ancient times, and even at this day, to the inhabitants of these countries.

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slothfulness in not being affected with the afflictions of the Church as we ought. The Psalmist compares his days *to smoke*, and *his bones to the stones of the hearth*, which, in the course of time, are consumed by the fire. By *bones* he means the strength of man. And, were not men devoid of feeling, such a melancholy spectacle of the wrath of God would assuredly have the effect of drying up their bones, and wasting away their whole vigour.

4. *My heart is smitten, and dried up like grass.* Here he employs a third similitude, declaring that his heart is withered, and wholly dried up like mown grass. But he intends to express something more than that his heart was withered, and his bones reduced to a state of dryness. His language implies, that as the grass, when it is cut down, can no longer receive juice from the earth, nor retain the life and vigour which it derived from the root, so his heart being, as it were, torn and cut off from its root, was deprived of its natural nourishment. The meaning of the last clause, *I have forgotten to eat my bread*, is, My sorrow has been so great, that I have neglected my ordinary food. The Jews, it is true, during their captivity in Babylon, did eat their food; and it would have been an evidence of their having fallen into sinful despair, had they starved themselves to death. But what he means to say is, that he was so afflicted with sorrow as to refuse all delights, and to deprive himself even of food and drink. True believers may cease for a time to partake of their ordinary food, when, by voluntary fasting, they humbly beseech God to turn away his wrath, but the prophet does not here speak of that kind of abstinence from bodily sustenance. He speaks of such as is the effect of extreme mental distress, which is accompanied with a loathing of food, and a weariness of all things. In the close of the verse, he adds, that his body was, as it were, consuming or wasting away, so that his bones clave to his skin.

6. *I have become like a pelican of the wilderness.* Instead of rendering the original word by *pelican*, some translate it *bittern*, and others the *cuckoo*. The Hebrew word here used

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for *owl* is rendered by the Septuagint νυκτικοραξ, which signifies *a bat*.[1] But as even the Jews are doubtful as to the kind of birds here intended, let it suffice us simply to know, that in this verse there are pointed out certain melancholy birds, whose place of abode is in the holes of mountains and in deserts, and whose note, instead of being delightful and sweet to the ear, inspires those who hear it with terror. I am removed, as if he had said, from the society of men, and am become almost like a wild beast of the forest. Although the people of God dwelt in a well cultivated and fertile region, yet the whole country of Chaldea and Assyria was to them like a wilderness, since their hearts were bound by the strongest ties of affection to the temple, and to their native country from which they had been expelled. The third similitude, which is taken from *the sparrow*, denotes such grief as produces the greatest uneasiness. The word צִפּוֹר, *tsippor*, signifies in general any kind of bird; but I have no doubt that it is here to be understood of the sparrow. It is described as *solitary* or *alone*, because it has been bereaved of its mate; and so deeply affected are these little birds when separated from their mates, that their distress exceeds almost all sorrow.[2]

[1] "La translation Grecque ha Nicticorax qui est Chauvesouris."—*Fr.*

[2] Although Calvin expresses himself as having no doubt that the sparrow is here intended, the most eminent expositors are of a different opinion, contending that it is difficult to reconcile with the nature of the sparrow the ideas of *wakefulness* and *solitude* which the Psalmist represents as characteristic of the bird to which he compares himself. The sparrow is not a solitary moping bird which sits mournfully on the house-top, nor so timid as to betake itself to the darkest corners for concealment, and to spend the live long night in sleepless anxiety. It is gregarious, is commonly found chirping and fluttering about in the crowd, a pert, loquacious, and bustling creature, and builds its nest in the habitations of men. Every part of the description leads to the supposition that some nocturnal bird is to be understood, which from instinct hates the light, and comes forth from its hiding-place only when the shadows of the evening fall to hunt its prey, and from amidst the fragments of some mouldering ruin to attract the attention of mankind by its mournful voice. Accordingly, it has been thought that the Psalmist refers to some species of the owl, distinguished for its plaintive cry and solitary disposition.—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture*, vol. ii. pp. 355–357. "But," says Merrick, "as *chos*, mentioned in the preceding verse, seems also to signify an *owl*, we are perhaps to suppose two sorts of *owls* intended, one of which confines itself to deserts or ruinous places, and the other sometimes

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8. *My enemies have reviled me daily; and those who are mad against me have sworn by me.*[1]
9. *For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,* [or, *with my tears,*]
10. *On account of thy indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.*
11. *My days are like a shadow which declineth; and I am dried up like the grass.*

8. *My enemies have reviled me daily.* The faithful, to excite the compassion of God towards them, tell him that they are not only objects of mockery to their enemies, but also that

approaches cities or villages, and according to Virgil's description, (which Bochart quotes as conformable to that of the Psalmist,) *sits alone on the house-top.*

> 'Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo
> Visa queri, et longas in fletum ducere voces.'
> *Æneid*, lib. iv. l. 462.

I doubt whether the Psalmist would in two verses together compare his situation to that of the very same bird, with no other difference than that of its sitting in the desert in one verse, and on the house-top in the other." Bochart thinks that the *screech-owl* is intended. The reason which Calvin assigns for the sparrow being called solitary, namely, because of the extreme sorrow which she feels when deprived of her mate, does not agree with the natural history of that bird; for, unlike the turtle, who, on losing her spouse, remains in a state of inconsolable widowhood, she accepts without reluctance the first companion that solicits her affections.

[1] Horsley renders the concluding sentence,—

> "And the profligate make me their standard of execration."

"Houbigant," says he, "rightly observes, that the verb נשבע, governing its objects by the prefix ב, signifies *to swear by*, not *to swear against*. For נשבעי, therefore, he would substitute another word; which, however, bears not the sense he would impose upon it. Archbishop Secker attempts to explain the text as it stands, but, in my judgment, unsuccessfully, unless נשבע may signify *to execrate* one's self or another. I find no example of this use of the verb. But the [use] of the noun in Num. v. 21, and Isa. lxv. 15, may seem, in some degree, to countenance the Archbishop's interpretation. The other passages to which he refers are little to the purpose." Rosenmüller gives a similar interpretation. "*They swear by me;* they derive their arguments and examples from my calamities; when they mean to imprecate evil on themselves as the persons swearing, or on another as the object of their malediction, they use my name as a form of execration, as if they said, 'Let our fate be that of these miserable Jews, if we speak what is false.'—See Isa. lxv. 15; Jer. xxix. 22."

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they swore by them. The indignity complained of is, that the ungodly so shamefully triumphed over God's chosen people, as even to borrow from their calamities a form of swearing and imprecation. This was to regard the fate of the Jews as a signal pattern in uttering the language of imprecation. When, therefore, at the present day the ungodly, in like manner, give themselves loose reins in pouring forth against us contumelious language, let us learn to fortify ourselves with this armour, by which such kind of temptation, however sharp, may be overcome. The Holy Spirit, in dictating to the faithful this form of prayer, meant to testify that God is moved by such revilings to succour his people; even as we find it stated in Isaiah xxxvii. 23, "Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice? even against the Holy One of Israel;" and in the verse immediately preceding the prophet had said, "He hath despised thee, O daughter of Zion! against thee hath he shaken the head, O daughter of Jerusalem!" It is surely an inestimable comfort that the more insolent our enemies are against us, the more is God incited to gird himself to aid us. In the second clause the inspired writer expresses more strongly the cruelty of his enemies, when he speaks of their being *mad against him.* As the verb הלל, *halal,* which we have rendered *mad,* generally signifies *to praise,* it might here be understood as having, by the figure antiphrasis, a sense the very opposite—*those who dispraised* or *reproached me.* But it is better to follow the commonly received interpretation. Some maintain that they are called *mad,* because they manifested their own folly, making it evident from the manner in which they acted, that they were worthless persons; but this opinion does too much violence to the text. The more satisfactory sense is, that the people of God charge revilers with cruelty or furious hatred.

9. *For I have eaten ashes like bread.* Some think that the order is here inverted, and that the letter כ, *caph,* the sign of similitude, which is put before לחם, *lechem,* the word for *bread,* ought to be placed before אפר, *epher,* the word for

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ashes; as if it had been said, I find no more relish for my bread than I do for ashes; and the reason is, because sorrow of heart produces loathing of food. But the simpler meaning is, that lying prostrate on the ground, they licked, as it were, the earth, *and so did eat ashes instead of bread.* It was customary for those who mourned to stretch themselves at full length with their faces on the ground. The prophet, however, intended to express a different idea—to intimate, that when he partook of his meals, there was no table set before him, but his bread was thrown upon the ground to him in a foul and disgusting manner. Speaking, therefore, in the person of the faithful, he asserts that he was so fixed to the ground that he did not even rise from it to take his food. The same sentiment is expressed in the last part of the verse —*I have mingled my drink with weeping;* for while mourners usually restrain their sorrow during the short time in which they refresh themselves with food, he declares that his mourning was without intermission. Some, instead of reading in the first clause, *as bread,* read, *in bread;*[1] and as the two letters, כ, *caph,* and ב, *beth,* nearly resemble each other, I prefer reading *in bread,* which agrees better with the second clause.

10. *On account of thy anger and thy wrath.* He now declares that the greatness of his grief proceeded not only from outward troubles and calamities, but from a sense that these were a punishment inflicted upon him by God. And surely there is nothing which ought to wound our hearts more deeply, than when we feel that God is angry with us. The meaning then amounts to this—O Lord! I do not confine my attention to those things which would engage the mind of worldly men; but I rather turn my thoughts to thy wrath; for were it not that thou art angry with us, we would have been still enjoying the inheritance given us by thee, from which we have justly been expelled by thy displeasure. When God then strikes us with his hand, we should not

[1] Supposing the reading to be בלחם, *balechem,* instead of כלחם, *calechem;* and from the similarity in form between the letters ב and כ, transcribers might very readily have mistaken the latter for the former.

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merely groan under the strokes inflicted upon us, as foolish men usually do, but should chiefly look to the cause that we may be truly humbled. This is a lesson which it would be of great advantage to us to learn.

The last clause of the verse, *Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down*, may be understood in two ways. As we lift up what we intend to throw down with greater violence against the ground, the sentence may denote a violent method of casting down, as if it had been said, Thou hast crushed me more severely by throwing me down headlong from on high, than if I had merely fallen from the station which I occupied.[1] But this seems to be another amplification of his grief. Nothing being more bitter to an individual than to be reduced from a happy condition to extreme misery, the prophet mournfully complains that the chosen people were deprived of the distinguished advantages which God had conferred upon them in time past, so that the very remembrance of his former goodness, which should have afforded consolation to them, embittered their sorrow. Nor was it the effect of ingratitude to turn the consideration of the divine benefits, which they had formerly received, into matter of sadness; since they acknowledged that their being reduced to such a state of wretchedness and degradation was through their own sins. God has no delight in changing, as if, after having given us some taste of his goodness, he intended

1 "What is meant by נישאתני, 'thou hast lifted me up,' &c., is to be judged by the immediate antecedents, *indignation* and *wrath*; by these is meant vehement displeasure and anger, and in God, in whom anger is not found, effects that bear analogy with those which proceed from angry men. To such it is ordinary *to cast to the ground* any thing that they are displeased with, and where the displeasure is vehement, *to lift it up* first as high as they can, that they may *cast it down* with more violence, and dash it in pieces by the fall. And this is the meaning of the phrase here, and so is a pathetical expression of his present affliction, heightened by the dignity of the public office wherein Nehemiah was at the time of writing this mournful psalm, (Neh. i. 1, and ii. 1.) The greater his place was at Shushan, the deeper this sorrow for his countrymen and for Jerusalem (Neh. i. 3) pierced him, whereupon he complains that God, by way of indignation, hath dealt with him, as those that take an earthen vessel and throw it against the pavement, and that they may beat it to pieces the more certainly, *lift it up* first as high as they can, *to throw it down* with more violence. This the LXX. have fitly rendered, ἐπάρας κατέρραξάς με, and the Latin, *elevans illisisti me*, 'having lifted me up, thou hast dashed me to pieces.'"—*Hammond.*

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forthwith to deprive us of it. As his goodness is inexhaustible, so his blessing would flow upon us without intermission, were it not for our sins which break off the course of it. Although, then, the remembrance of God's benefits ought to assuage our sorrows, yet still it is a great aggravation of our calamity to have fallen from an elevated position, and to find that we have so provoked his anger, as to make him withdraw from us his benignant and bountiful hand. Thus when we consider that the image of God, which distinguished Adam, was the brightness of the celestial glory; and when, on the contrary, we now see the ignominy and degradation to which God has subjected us in token of his wrath, this contrast cannot surely fail of making us feel more deeply the wretchedness of our condition. Whenever, therefore, God, after having stripped us of the blessings which he had conferred upon us, gives us up to reproach, let us learn that we have so much the greater cause to lament, because, through our own fault, we have turned light into darkness.

11. *My days are like the shadow which declineth.*[1] When the sun is directly over our heads, that is to say, at mid-day, we do not observe such sudden changes of the shadows which his light produces; but when he begins to decline towards the west the shadows vary almost every moment. This is the reason why the sacred writer expressly makes mention of *the shadow which declineth*. What he attributes to the afflicted Church seems indeed to be equally applicable to all men; but he had a special reason for employing this comparison to illustrate the condition of the Church when subjected to the calamity of exile. It is true, that as soon as we advance towards old age, we speedily fall into decay. But the complaint here is, that this befell the people of God

[1] It is literally, "My days are like a shadow, stretched out." As the sun descends in the firmament, the shadow of any terrestrial object gradually lengthens, and grows fainter as it becomes longer, until shooting out to an unmeasurable length, it disappears. The Psalmist complains that his days were like a shadow nearly stretched to its utmost length, and at the point of being lost in total darkness. He felt that he had far passed his meridian, that the sun of life was about to set, and the dark night of death to fall down upon him.—See Ps. cix. 23.

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in the very flower of their age. By the term *days* is to be understood the whole course of their life; and the meaning is, that the captivity was to the godly as the setting of the sun, because they quickly failed. In the end of the verse the similitude of *withered grass*, used a little before, is repeated, to intimate that their life during the captivity was involved in many sorrows which dried up in them the very sap of life. Nor is this wonderful, since to live in that condition would have been worse than a hundred deaths had they not been sustained by the hope of future deliverance. But although they were not altogether overwhelmed by temptation, they must have been in great distress, because they saw themselves abandoned by God.

12. *And thou, O Jehovah! shalt dwell for ever; and the memorial of thee from generation to generation.*
13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to pity her, for the appointed time, is come.*
14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and will have compassion upon her dust.*

12. *And thou, O Jehovah! shalt dwell for ever.* When the prophet, for his own encouragement, sets before himself the eternity of God, it seems, at first sight, to be a far-fetched consolation; for what benefit will accrue to us from the fact that God sits immutable on his heavenly throne, when, at the same time, our frail and perishing condition does not permit us to continue unmoved for a single moment? And, what is more, this knowledge of the blessed repose enjoyed by God enables us the better to perceive that our life is a mere illusion. But the inspired writer, calling to remembrance the promises by which God had declared that he would make the Church the object of his special care, and particularly that remarkable article of the covenant, "I will dwell in the midst of you," (Exod. xxv. 8,) and, trusting to that sacred and indissoluble bond, has no hesitation in representing all the godly languishing, though they were in a state of suffering and wretchedness, as partakers of this celestial glory in which God dwells. The word *memorial* is also to be viewed in the same light.

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What advantage would we derive from this eternity and immutability of God's being, unless we had in our hearts the knowledge of him, which, produced by his gracious covenant, begets in us the confidence arising from a mutual relationship between him and us? The meaning then is, "We are like withered grass, we are decaying every moment, we are not far from death, yea rather, we are, as it were, already dwelling in the grave; but since thou, O God! hast made a covenant with us, by which thou hast promised to protect and defend thine own people, and hast brought thyself into a gracious relation to us, giving us the fullest assurance that thou wilt always dwell in the midst of us, instead of despondings, we must be of good courage; and although we may see only ground for despair if we depend upon ourselves, we ought nevertheless to lift up our minds to the heavenly throne, from which thou wilt at length stretch forth thy hand to help us." Whoever is in a moderate degree acquainted with the sacred writings, will readily acknowledge that whenever we are besieged with death, in a variety of forms, we should reason thus: As God continues unchangeably the same—"without variableness or shadow of turning"—nothing can hinder him from aiding us; and this he will do, because we have his word, by which he has laid himself under obligation to us, and because he has deposited with us his own memorial, which contains in it a sacred and indissoluble bond of fellowship.

13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion.* We have here the conclusion drawn from the truth stated in the preceding verse—God is eternal, and therefore he will have compassion upon Zion. God's eternity is to be considered as impressed upon the memorial, or word, by which he has brought himself under obligation to maintain our welfare. Besides, as he is not destitute of the power, and as it is impossible for him to deny himself, we ought not to entertain any apprehension of his failing to accomplish, in his own time, what he has promised. We have observed, in another place, that the verb *to arise* refers to what is made apparent to the eye of sense; for although he continues always im-

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mutable, yet, in putting forth his power, he manifests his majesty by the external act, as it is termed.

When the prophet treats of the restoration of the Church, he sets forth the divine mercy as its cause. He represents this mercy under a twofold aspect, and therefore employs different words. In the first place, as in the matter under consideration, the good deserts of men are entirely out of the question, and as God cannot be led from any cause external to himself to build up his Church, the prophet traces the cause of it solely to the free goodness of God. In the second place, he contemplates this mercy as connected with the Divine promises. *Thou shalt have mercy upon Zion, for the time appointed, according to thy good pleasure, is come.* Meanwhile, it is to be observed that, in magnifying the Divine mercy, his design was to teach true believers that their safety depended on it alone. But we must now attend to what time is alluded to. The word מועד, *moed*, signifies all kind of fixed or appointed days. There is, then, beyond all doubt, a reference to the prophecy of Jeremiah, recorded in the xxix. chapter of his book, at the 10th verse, and repeated in the last chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, at the 21st verse. That the faithful might not sink into despondency, through the long continuance of their calamities, they needed to be supported by the hope that an end to their captivity had been appointed by God, and that it would not extend beyond seventy years. Daniel was employed in meditating on this very topic, when "he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek, by prayer and supplications," the re-establishment of the Church, (chap. ix. 2.) In like manner, the object now aimed at by the prophet was to encourage both himself and others to confidence in prayer, putting God in mind of this remarkable prophecy, as an argument to induce him to bring to a termination their melancholy captivity. And surely if, in our prayers, we do not continually remember the Divine promises, we only cast forth our desires into the air like smoke. It is, however, to be observed, that although the time of the promised deliverance was approaching, or had already arrived, yet the prophet does not cease from the exercise of prayer, to which God stirs us up by means of his word.

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And although the time was fixed, yet he calls upon God, for the performance of his covenant, in such a manner, as that he is still betaking himself to his free goodness alone; for the promises by which God brings himself under obligation to us do not, in any degree, obscure his grace.

14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones.* To restrict this to Cyrus and Darius is altogether unsuitable. It is not at all wonderful to find the Jewish doctors hunting, with excessive eagerness, after foolish subtilties; but I am surprised that some of our modern commentators subscribe to such a poor and cold interpretation. I am aware that, in some places, the unbelieving and the wicked are called the servants of God, as in Jeremiah xxv. 9, because God makes use of them as instruments for executing his judgments. Nay, I admit that Cyrus is called by name God's chosen servant, (Isaiah xliv. 28,) but the Holy Spirit would not have bestowed so honourable a title, either on him or Darius, without some qualification. Besides, it is probable that this psalm was composed before the edict was published, which granted the people liberty to return to their native country. It therefore follows, that God's people alone are included in the catalogue of his servants, because it is their purpose, during the whole of their life, to obey his will in all things. The prophet, I have no doubt, speaks in general of the whole Church, intimating that this was not the wish entertained merely by one man, but was shared by the whole body of the Church. The more effectually to induce God to listen to his prayer, he calls upon all the godly, who were then in the world, to join with him in the same request. It, unquestionably, very much contributes to increase the confidence of success, when supplications are made by all the people of God together, as if in the person of one man, according to what the Apostle Paul declares, (2 Cor. i. 11,) "Ye also, helping together by prayer for us, that, for the gift bestowed upon us, by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

Farther, when the deformed materials which remained of the ruins of the temple and city are emphatically termed *the*

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stones of Zion, this is designed to intimate, not only that the faithful in time past were affected with the outward splendour of the temple, when, besides attracting the eyes of men, it had power to ravish with admiration all their senses, but also, that although the temple was destroyed, and nothing was to be seen where it stood but hideous desolation, yet their attachment to it continued unalterable, and they acknowledged the glory of God, in its crumbling stones and decayed rubbish. As the temple was built by the appointment of God, and as he had promised its restoration, it was, doubtless, proper and becoming that the godly should not withdraw their affections from its ruins. Meanwhile, as an antidote against the discouraging influence of the taunting mockery of the heathen, they required to look into the Divine word for something else than what presented itself to their bodily eyes. Knowing that the very site of the temple was consecrated to God, and that that sacred edifice was to be rebuilt on the same spot, they did not cease to regard it with reverence, although its stones lay in disorder, mutilated and broken, and heaps of useless rubbish were to be seen scattered here and there. The sadder the desolation is to which the Church has been brought, the less ought our affections to be alienated from her. Yea, rather, this compassion which the faithful then exercised,[1] ought to draw from us sighs and groans; and would to God that the melancholy description in this passage were not so applicable to our own time as it is! He, no doubt, has his churches erected in some places, where he is purely worshipped; but, if we cast our eyes upon the whole world, we behold his word every where trampled under foot, and his worship defiled by countless abominations. Such being the case, his holy temple is assuredly every where demolished, and in a state of wretched desolation; yea, even those small churches in which he dwells are torn and scattered. What are these humble erections, when compared with that splendid edifice described by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah? But no desolation ought to prevent us from loving the very stones and dust of the Church. Let us leave the Papists to be proud of their altars,

[1] "Mais qui plus est ceste *compassion* que les fideles ont tenu lors."—*Fr.*

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their huge buildings, and their other exhibitions of pomp and splendour; for all that heathenish magnificence is nothing else but an abomination in the sight of God and his angels, whereas the ruins of the true temple are sacred.

15. *And the nations shall fear the name of Jehovah,*[1] *and all the kings of the earth thy glory.*
16. *For Jehovah hath built up Zion, and hath appeared in his glory.*
17. *He hath regarded the prayer of the solitary,*[2] *and hath not despised their prayers.*[3]
18. *This shall be registered for the generation that is to come: and the people to be created shall praise him.*[4]

15. *And the nations shall fear the name of Jehovah.* The prophet here describes the fruit which would result from the deliverance of the ancient tribes; which is, that thereby God's glory would be rendered illustrious among nations and kings. He tacitly intimates, that when the Church is op-

[1] "Craindront ton nom, Seigneur."—*Fr.* "Shall fear thy name, O Lord!"

[2] The original word for *the solitary* is הָרָעֵר, *ha-ârâr;* and as עַרְעָר signifies *the tamarish* or *myrtle*, some translate, "the afflicted or dejected man;" the myrtle being an emblem of a low and depressed state of the Church. Accordingly, in the Chaldee, it is "the prayer of the desolate," and in the Septuagint, "the prayer of the humble." Houbigant derives the word from רָעַע, *frangere, to break*, and renders it, "the afflicted." Others read, "the destitute," supposing the word to come from עָרָה, *was naked*, as Fry: "'When he hath turned himself to the prayer of the destitute'—the people emptied, and poured forth—made bare or stripped naked." Others prefer the version, "He regarded him when exciting his prayer," as if the root of the Hebrew term were עוּר, *to excite.*

[3] Horsley translates the verbs in the 16th and 17th verses in the present,—

"Truly Jehovah is building Zion;
He appeareth in his glory.
He regardeth the prayer of the destitute,
And their prayer he despiseth not."

He regards the psalm as a "prayer and lamentation of a believer, in the time of the last Antichristian persecution;" and after observing that the 16th and 17th verses are rendered by our English Bible in the future, he says, "These futures, in the original, are all present; 'buildeth—appeareth—regardeth—and despiseth not.' The Psalmist in his confidence of the event speaks of it as doing."

[4] "Le Seigneur."—*Fr.* "The Lord." In the Hebrew it is יהּ, *Jah.*

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pressed, the Divine glory is at the same time debased; even as the God of Israel was, no doubt, at the period referred to, derided by the ungodly, as if he had been destitute of the power to succour his people. It is therefore declared, that if he redeem them, it will afford such a remarkable proof of his power as to constrain the Gentiles to reverence Him whom they contemned.

The concluding part of the 16th verse, *He hath appeared in his glory*, refers to the manifestation which God made of himself when he brought forth his Church from the darkness of death; even as it is said in another place concerning her first deliverance, "Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion," (Psalm cxiv. 2.) In like manner in the present passage, by again gathering to himself his people who were dispersed, and by raising his Church, as it were, from death to life, he appeared in his glory. It is surely no ordinary consolation to know that the love of God towards us is so great, that he will have his glory to shine forth in our salvation. It is true, that when the pious Jews were in the midst of their afflictions, the working of divine power was hidden from them; but they nevertheless always beheld it by the eye of faith, and in the mirror of the divine promises.

17. *He hath regarded the prayer of the solitary.* It is worthy of notice, that the deliverance of the chosen tribes is ascribed to the prayers of the faithful. God's mercy was indeed the sole cause which led him to deliver his Church, according as he had graciously promised this blessing to her; but to stir up true believers to greater earnestness in prayer, he promises that what he has purposed to do of his own good pleasure, he will grant in answer to their requests. Nor is there any inconsistency between these two truths, that God preserves the Church in the exercise of his free mercy, and that he preserves her in answer to the prayers of his people; for as their prayers are connected with the free promises, the effect of the former depends entirely upon the latter. When it is said, that *the prayers of the solitary* were heard, it is not to be understood of one man only, (for in the clause immediately following, the plural number is used;) but all the

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Jews, so long as they remained ejected from their own country, and lived as exiles in a strange land, are called *solitary*, because, although the countries of Assyria and Chaldea were remarkably fertile and delightful, yet these wretched captives, as I have previously observed, wandered there as in a wilderness. And as at that time this solitary people obtained favour by sighing, so now when the faithful are scattered, and are without their regular assemblies, the Lord will hear their groanings in this desolate dispersion, provided they all with one consent, and with unfeigned faith, earnestly breathe after the restoration of the Church.

18. *This shall be registered for the generation that is to come.* The Psalmist magnifies still more the fruit of the deliverance of his people, for the purpose of encouraging himself and others in the hope of obtaining the object of their prayers. He intimates, that this will be a memorable work of God, the praise of which shall be handed down to succeeding ages. Many things are worthy of praise, which are soon forgotten; but the prophet distinguishes between the salvation of the Church, for which he makes supplication, and common benefits. By the word *register*, he means that the history of this would be worthy of having a place in the public records, that the remembrance of it might be transmitted to future generations. There is in the words a beautiful contrast between the new creation of the people and the present destruction; of which interpreters improperly omit to take any notice. When the people were expelled from their country, the Church was in a manner extinguished. Her very name might seem to be dead, when the Jews were mingled among the heathen nations, and no longer constituted a distinct and united body. Their return was accordingly as it were a second birth. Accordingly, the prophet with propriety expects a new creation. Although the Church had perished, he was persuaded that God, by his wonderful power, would make her rise again from death to renovated life. This is a remarkable passage, showing that the Church is not always so preserved, as to continue to outward appearance to survive, but that when she seems to be dead, she is suddenly created anew,

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whenever it so pleases God. Let no desolation, therefore, which befalls the Church, deprive us of the hope, that as God once created the world out of nothing, so it is his proper work to bring forth the Church from the darkness of death.

19. *For he hath looked down from the high place of his holiness ;*[1] *Jehovah hath looked down from the heavens unto the earth,*
20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner ; to release the sons of death ;*[2]
21. *That the name of Jehovah may be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem ;*
22. *When the peoples* [or *the nations*] *shall be gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve Jehovah.*

19. *For he hath looked down from the high place of his holiness.* Now the prophet contemplates the deliverance after which he breathes with anxious desire, as if it had been already accomplished. That the malignity of men might not attempt to obscure such a signal blessing of Heaven, he openly and in express terms claims for God his rightful praise; and the people were constrained in many ways to acknowledge therein the divine hand. Long before they were dragged into captivity, this calamity had been foretold, that when it took place the judgment of God might be clearly manifested; and at the same time deliverance had been promised them, and the time specified to be after the lapse of seventy years. The ingratitude of men therefore could not devise or invent any other cause to which to ascribe their return but the mere goodness of God. Accordingly, it is said, that *God looked down from heaven,* that the Jews might not attribute to the grace and favour of Cyrus the deliverance which evidently

[1] "Du haut lieu de son sanctuaire."—*Fr.* "From the high place of his sanctuary.

[2] "C'est, ceux qui estoyent jugez à mort."—Note, *Fr. marg.* "That is, those who were appointed to death, *or* destined to be put to death." "*Sons* of death" is a Hebraism. "According to the Hebrew idiom, the thing which is the effect, the object, the production of another thing, or in almost any way can be said to belong to it, is called 'the son' of that other. The expression is so thoroughly naturalised with us, that we are hardly aware of its origin, which appears to be in the Hebrew writers."—*Mant.*

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proceeded from Heaven. *The high place of his holiness* or *sanctuary* is here equivalent to heaven. As the temple, in some parts of Scripture, (Psalm xxvi. 8, and lxxvi. 2,) is called "the habitation of God," in respect of men, so, that we may not imagine that there is any thing earthly in God, he assigns to himself a dwelling-place in heaven, not because he is shut up there, but that we may seek him above the world.

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner.* Here the prophet repeats once more what he had previously touched upon concerning prayer, in order again to stir up the hearts of the godly to engage in that exercise, and that after their deliverance they might know it to have been granted to their faith, because, depending on the divine promises, they had sent up their groanings to heaven. He calls them *prisoners;* for although they were not bound in fetters, their captivity resembled a most rigorous imprisonment. Yea, he affirms a little after *that they were devoted to death,* to give them to understand that their life and safety would have been altogether hopeless, had they not been delivered from death by the extraordinary power of God.

21. *That the name of Jehovah may be declared in Zion.* Here is celebrated a still more ample and richer fruit of this deliverance than has been previously mentioned, which is, that the Jews would not only be united into one body to give thanks to God, but that, when brought back to their own country, they would also gather kings and nations into the same unity of faith, and into the same divine worship with themselves. At that time it was a thing altogether incredible, not only that the praises of God should within a short period resound, as in the days of old, in that temple which was burnt and completely overthrown,[1] but also that the nations should resort thither from all quarters, and be associated together in the service of God with the Jews, who were then like a putrified carcase. The prophet, to inspire

[1] "Qui estoit bruslé et du tout ruiné."—*Fr.*

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the people with the hope of returning to their own land, argues that it was impossible that the place which God had chosen for himself should be left in perpetual desolation; and declares, that so far from this being the case there would be new matter for praising God, inasmuch as His name would be worshipped by all nations, and the Church would consist not of one nation only, but of the whole world. This we know has been fulfilled under the administration of Christ, as was announced in prophecy by the holy patriarch, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and *unto him shall the gathering of the Gentiles be*," (Gen. xlix. 10.) But as the prophets are wont, in celebrating the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, to extend it to the coming of Christ, the inspired bard in this place does not lay hold on merely a part of the subject, but carries forward the grace of God, even to its consummation. And although it was not necessary that all who were converted to Christ should go up to Jerusalem, yet following the manner of expression usual with the prophets, he has laid down the observance of the divine worship which was appointed under the law, as a mark of true godliness. Farther, we may learn from this passage, that the name of God is never better celebrated than when true religion is extensively propagated, and when the Church increases, which on that account is called, "The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," (Isa. lxi. 3.)

23. *He hath afflicted my strength in the way; and shortened my days.*
24. *I said, O my God! cut me not off in the midst of my days: for*[1] *thy years are from generation to generation.*
25. *Thou hast aforetime founded the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands.*
26. *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: and all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:*

[1] "*Car.*"—*Fr.* This supplement is not in the Latin version.

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27. *But thou art the same,*[1] *and thy years shall not fail.*[2]
28. *The children of thy servants shall dwell, and their seed shall be established before thee.*

23. *He hath afflicted my strength in the way.* Some improperly restrict this complaint to the time when the Jews were subjected to much annoyance after the liberty granted them to return to their own land. We are rather to understand the word *journey* or *way* in a metaphorical sense. As the manifestation of Christ was the goal of the race which God's ancient people were running, they justly complain that they are afflicted and weakened in the midst of their course.[3] Thus they set before God his promise, telling him, that although they had not run at random, but had confided in his protection, they were nevertheless broken and crushed by his hand in the midst of their journey. They do not indeed find fault with him, as if he had disappointed their hope; but fully persuaded, that he does not deal deceitfully with those who serve him, by this complaint they strengthen them-

[1] The original word for *the same* is הוּא, *hua*, literally *He*,—"But thou art HE;" that is, *the* ETERNAL; *necessarily eternal;* and, consequently, unchangeable and imperishable. "The Hebrew word appears to be one of the divine names, as if it were said, 'He who hath permanent existence, who exists eminently.' Lowth observes, that it is often equivalent to the true and eternal God; and that the phrase in this place expresses God's eternal and unchangeable nature."—*Mant.*

[2] This and the two preceding verses are applied by the Apostle Paul to Christ in Heb. i. 10, 11, 12, in proof of his superiority to angels. In this passage then, Christ, it would appear, is the person addressed; for if the apostle's inspiration is admitted, the correctness of his interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures cannot be doubted. Inappropriate applications of them, it is evident, would be inconsistent with his having spoken under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of God. And if these verses are applicable to the Saviour of men, they contain an irrefragable proof of his essential divinity. He is called *Jehovah* throughout the psalm, a name peculiar to God only; the creation of all things is said to be performed by him, a work peculiar to God only; eternity and immutability are ascribed to him, attributes which in the strict and absolute sense belong exclusively to God.

[3] *Way* or *journey* is a term often used in Scripture to denote the course of a man's life; and here the Psalmist speaks, as other sacred writers not unfrequently do, of the whole Jewish nation as if it were one man, and of its continuance, which was to be until the coming of Christ, as if the life of one man. It was now, so to speak, only in its meridian. An attention to this remark will assist the reader in understanding Calvin's exposition of the passage.

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selves in the hope of a favourable issue. In the same sense they add, that *their days were shortened*, because they directed their view to the fulness of time, which did not arrive till Christ was revealed.[1] It accordingly follows,—(verse 24,) *Cut me not off in the midst of my days.* They compare the intervening period until Christ should appear to the middle of life; for, as has been already observed, the Church only attained to her perfect age at his coming. This calamity, no doubt, had been foretold, but the nature of the covenant which God had entered into with his ancient people required that he should take them under his protection, and defend them. The captivity, therefore, was as it were a violent rupture, on which account the godly prayed with the greater confidence, that they might not be prematurely taken away in the midst of their journey. By speaking in this manner, they did not fix for themselves a certain term of life; but as God, in freely adopting them, had given them the commencement of life, with the assurance that he would maintain them even to the advent of Christ, they might warrantably bring forward and plead this promise. Lord, as if they had said, thou hast promised us life, not for a few days, or for a month or for a few years, but until thou shouldst renew the whole world, and gather together all nations under the dominion of thine Anointed One.

What then does the prophet mean when he prays, *Let us not perish in the midst of our course?*[2] The reason stated in the clause immediately following, *Thy years are from generation to generation*, seems to be quite inapplicable in the pre-

[1] Consequently, the ruin and desolation to which they seemed given up by the Babylonish captivity, was like the cutting off or shortening of their days.

[2] "Possibly the Psalmist (whom some learned interpreters suppose to be Daniel) may have respect to that prophecy, Dan. ix. 24, 25, which probably was published before this time; for this time was almost precisely the midst of the days between the building of the material temple by Solomon, and the building of the spiritual temple, or the Church, by the Messias; there being about a thousand years distance between these two periods, whereof seventy prophetical weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, were yet to come. And so he prays that God would not root them out of this Babylonish captivity, but would graciously restore them to their own land, and preserve them as a Church and nation there, until the coming of the Messias."—*Poole's Annotations.*

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sent case. Because God is everlasting, does it therefore follow that men will be everlasting too? But on Psalm xc. 2, we have shown how we may with propriety bring forward his eternity, as a ground of confidence in reference to our salvation; for he desires to be known as eternal, not only in his mysterious and incomprehensible essence, but also in his word, according to the declaration of the Prophet Isaiah, (chap. xl. 6-8,) "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Now since God links us to himself by means of his word, however great the distance of our frail condition from his heavenly glory, our faith should nevertheless penetrate to that blessed state from which he looks down upon our miseries. Although the comparison between his eternal existence and the brief duration of human life is introduced also for another purpose, yet when he sees that men pass away as it were in a moment, and speedily evanish, it moves him to compassion, as shall presently be declared at greater length.

25. *Thou hast aforetime founded the earth.* Here the sacred writer amplifies what he had previously stated, declaring, that compared with God the whole world is a form which quickly vanishes away; and yet a little after he represents the Church as exempted from this the common lot of all sublunary things, because she has for her foundation the word of God, while her safety is secured by the same word. Two subjects are therefore here brought under our consideration. The first is, that since the heavens themselves are in the sight of God almost as evanescent as smoke, the frailty of the whole human race is such as may well excite his compassion; and the second is, that although there is no stability in the heavens and the earth, yet the Church shall continue stedfast for ever, because she is upheld by the eternal truth of God. By the first of these positions, true believers are taught to consider with all humility, when they come into the divine presence, how frail and transitory their condition is, that they may bring nothing with them but their own emptiness. Such self-abasement is the first step to our obtaining

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favour in the sight of God, even as He also affirms that he is moved by the sight of our miseries to be merciful to us. The comparison taken from the heavens is a very happy illustration; for how long have they continued to exist, when contrasted with the brief span of human life, which passes or rather flies away so swiftly? How many generations of men have passed away since the creation, while the heavens still continue as they were amidst this continual fluctuation? Again, so beautiful is their arrangement, and so excellent their frame-work, that the whole fabric proclaims itself to be the product of *God's hands.*[1] And yet neither the long period during which the heavens have existed, nor their fair embellishment, will exempt them from perishing. What then shall become of us poor mortals, who die when we are as yet scarcely born? for there is no part of our life which does not rapidly hasten to death.

Interpreters, however, do not all explain these words, *The heavens shall perish*, in the same way. Some understand them as expressing simply the change they shall undergo, which will be a species of destruction; for although they are not to be reduced to nothing, yet this change of their nature, as it may be termed, will destroy what is mortal and corruptible in them, so that they shall become, in a manner, different and new heavens. Others explain the words conditionally, and make the supplement, "If it so please God," regarding it as a thing absurd to say that the heavens are subject to corruption. But first, there is no necessity for introducing these supplementary words, which obscure the sense instead of making it plainer. In the next place, these expositors improperly attribute an immortal state to the heavens, of which Paul declares that they "groan and travail in pain," like the earth and the other creatures, until the day of redemption, (Rom. viii. 22,) because they are subject to corruption; not indeed willingly, or in their own nature, but because man, by precipitating himself headlong into destruction, has drawn the whole world into a participation of the

[1] "The phrase is borrowed from the fact, that *hands* are the instruments by which men usually perform any operation; and this is, like other human operations and affections, figuratively transferred to God."—*Stuart on Heb.* i. 10.

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same ruin. Two things are to be here attended to; first, that the heavens are actually subject to corruption in consequence of the fall of man; and, secondly, that they shall be so renewed as to warrant the prophet to say that *they shall perish;* for this renovation will be so complete that they shall not be the same but other heavens. The amount is, that to whatever quarter we turn our eyes, we will see everywhere nothing but ground for despair till we come to God. What is there in us but rottenness and corruption? and what else are we but a mirror of death? Again, what are the changes which the whole world undergoes but a kind of presage, yea a prelude of destruction? If the whole frame-work of the world is hastening to its end, what will become of the human race? If all nations are doomed to perish, what stability will there be in men individually considered? We ought therefore to seek stability no where else but in God.

28. *The children of thy servants shall dwell.* By these words the prophet intimates that he does not ask the preservation of the Church, because it is a part of the human race, but because God has raised it above the revolutions of the world. And undoubtedly, when He adopted us as his children, his design was to cherish us as it were in his own bosom. The inference of the inspired bard is not, therefore, far-fetched, when, amidst innumerable storms, each of which might carry us away, he hopes that the Church will have a permanent existence. It is true, that when through our own fault we become estranged from God, we are also as it were cut off from the fountain of life; but no sooner are we reconciled to Him than he begins again to pour down his blessings upon us. Whence it follows that true believers, as they are regenerated by the incorruptible seed, shall continue to live after death, because God continues unchangeably the same. By the word *dwell*, is to be understood an abiding and everlasting inheritance.

When it is said that the seed of God's servants shall be established *before his face*, the meaning is, that it is not after the manner of the world, or according to the way in which the heavens and the earth are established, that the salvation

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of true believers is made stedfast, but because of the holy union which exists between them and God. By *the seed* and *children* of the godly, is to be understood not all their descendants without exception—for many who spring from them according to the flesh become degenerate—but those who do not turn aside from the faith of their parents. Successive generations are expressly pointed out, because the covenant extends even to future ages, as we shall again find in the subsequent psalm. If we firmly keep the treasure of life intrusted to us, let us not hesitate, although we may be environed with innumerable deaths, to cast the anchor of our faith in heaven, that the stability of our welfare may rest in God.

PSALM CIII.

By this psalm every godly man is taught to give thanks to God for the mercies bestowed upon himself in particular, and then for the grace which God has vouchsafed to all his chosen ones in common, by making a covenant of salvation with them in his law, that he might make them partakers of his adoption. But the Psalmist chiefly magnifies the mercy by which God sustains and bears with his people; and that not on account of any merit or worth of theirs, for they only deserve to be visited with severe punishment, but because he compassionates their frailty. The psalm is at length concluded with a general ascription of praise to God.

¶ A Psalm of David.[1]

1. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul! and all my inward parts, bless his holy name.*

[1] The author of this beautiful and affecting psalm was David; but the time and occasion of its composition are uncertain. Some are of opinion that it is a song of gratitude for David's recovery from some dangerous sickness. Others think it was written upon his receiving assurance that his great sin in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah was forgiven. "I am not prepared to say," observes Walford, "that this judgment is certainly

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2. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul! and forget not any of his benefits:*
3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*
4. *Who redeemeth thy life from the grave; who crowneth*[1] *thee with mercy and compassions;*
5. *Who satisfieth* [or *filleth*] *thy mouth with good: thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's.*[2]

1. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul!* The prophet, by stirring up himself to gratitude, gives by his own example a lesson to every man of the duty incumbent upon him. And doubtless our slothfulness in this matter has need of continual incitement. If even the prophet, who was inflamed with a more intense and fervent zeal than other men, was not free from this malady, of which his earnestness in stimulating himself is a plain confession, how much more necessary is it for us, who have abundant experience of our own torpor, to apply the same means for our quickening? The Holy Spirit, by his mouth, indirectly upbraids us on account of our not being more diligent in praising God, and at the same time points out the remedy, that every man may descend into himself

correct; but as it is a subject of no great moment, am willing to acquiesce in it. If it be correct, then we have two of the most instructive examples of enlightened and fervent piety, which are contained in the Holy Scriptures, occasioned by one failure in the conduct of a good man, who was habitually remarkable for his stedfast obedience to the laws of God. The one of these examples is in Psalm li., in which the sacred writer records his deep and humble penitence: and the other, which is now before us, displays the feelings of sacred joy and thankfulness, in terms that are most delightful and consolatory. So admirably adapted are these two psalms to the varied sentiments and emotions of Christian feeling, that I can scarcely suppose any real believer of the gospel is to be found who has not, on multiplied occasions, made them the objects of his attentive meditation, so as to have, if not the express words, yet the sense of them, engraven on his heart and memory, in characters never to be effaced but by death."

[1] "Ou, envirrone."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, surroundeth."

[2] Walford's rendering of this verse is as follows:—

> "Who satisfieth thy advancing age with good;
> Thy youth is renewed as the eagle's."

In defence of reading "thy advancing age" instead of "thy mouth," as it is in our English translation, and as Calvin has it, he observes, "The version here adopted is that of the Chaldee, and is supported by the parallelism in the following clause."

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and correct his own sluggishness. Not content with calling upon his *soul* (by which he unquestionably means the seat of the understanding and affections) to bless God, the prophet expressly adds his *inward parts*, addressing as it were his own mind and heart, and all the faculties of both. When he thus speaks to himself, it is as if, removed from the presence of men, he examined himself before God. The repetition renders his language still more emphatic, as if he thereby intended to reprove his own slothfulness.

2. *And forget not any of his benefits.* Here he instructs us that God is not deficient on his part in furnishing us with abundant matter for praising him. It is our own ingratitude which hinders us from engaging in this exercise. In the first place, he teaches us that the reason why God deals with such liberality towards us is, that we may be led to celebrate his praise; but at the same time he condemns our inconstancy, which hurries us away to any other object rather than to God. How is it that we are so listless and drowsy in the performance of this the chief exercise of true religion, if it is not because our shameful and wicked forgetfulness buries in our hearts the innumerable benefits of God, which are openly manifest to heaven and earth? Did we only retain the remembrance of them, the prophet assures us that we would be sufficiently inclined to perform our duty, since the sole prohibition which he lays upon us is, *not to forget them.*

3. *Who forgiveth all thy iniquities.* He now enumerates the different kinds of the divine benefits, in considering which he has told us that we are too forgetful and slothful. It is not without cause that he begins with God's pardoning mercy, for reconciliation with him is the fountain from which all other blessings flow. God's goodness extends even to the ungodly; but they are, notwithstanding, so far from having the enjoyment of it, that they do not even taste it. The first then of all the blessings of which we have the true and substantial enjoyment, is that which consists in God's freely pardoning and blotting out our sins, and receiving us into his

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favour. Yea, rather the forgiveness of sins, since it is accompanied with our restoration to the favour of God, also sanctifies whatever good things he bestows upon us, that they may contribute to our welfare. The second clause is either a repetition of the same sentiment, or else it opens up a wider view of it; for the consequence of free forgiveness is, that God governs us by his Spirit, mortifies the lusts of our flesh, cleanses us from our corruptions, and restores us to the healthy condition of a godly and an upright life. Those who understand the words, *who healeth all thy diseases*, as referring to the diseases of the body, and as implying that God, when he has forgiven our sins, also delivers us from bodily maladies, seem to put upon them a meaning too restricted. I have no doubt that the medicine spoken of has a respect to the blotting out of guilt; and, secondly, to the curing us of the corruptions inherent in our nature, which is effected by the Spirit of regeneration; and if any one will add as a third particular included, that God being once pacified towards us, also remits the punishment which we deserve, I will not object. Let us learn from this passage that, until the heavenly Physician succour us, we nourish within us, not only many diseases, but even many deaths.

4. *Who redeemeth thy life from the grave.* The Psalmist expresses more plainly what our condition is previous to God's curing our maladies—that we are dead and adjudged to the grave. The consideration that the mercy of God delivers us from death and destruction ought, therefore, to lead us to prize it the more highly. If the resurrection of the soul from the grave is the first step of spiritual life, what room for self-gloriation is left to man? The prophet next teaches us that the incomparable grace of God shines forth in the very commencement of our salvation, as well as in its whole progress; and the more to enhance the commendation of this grace, he adds the word *compassions* in the plural number. He asserts that we are *surrounded* with them; as if he had said, Before, behind, on all sides, above and beneath, the grace of God presents itself to us in immeasurable abundance; so that there is no place devoid of it. The same truth he after-

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wards amplifies in these words, *thy mouth is satisfied*, by which metaphor he alludes to the free indulgence of the palate, to which we surrender ourselves when we have a well-furnished table; for those who have scanty fare dare scarcely eat till they are half satisfied.[1] Not that he approves of gluttony in greedily devouring God's benefits, as men give loose reins to intemperance whenever they have great abundance; but he borrowed this phraseology from the common custom of men, to teach us that whatever good things our hearts can wish flow to us from God's bounty, even to perfect satisfaction. Those who take the Hebrew word עֶדִי, *adi*, for *ornament*,[2] mar the passage by a mere conceit of their own; and I am surprised how so groundless an imagination should have come into their minds, unless it may be accounted for from the circumstance that it is usual for men of a prying or inquisitive turn of mind, when they would show their ingenuity, to bring forward mere puerilities. The Psalmist next adds, that God was constantly infusing into him new vigour, so that his strength continued unimpaired, even as the Prophet Isaiah, (chap. lxv. 20,) in discoursing on the restoration of the Church, says that a man of a hundred years old shall be like a child. By this mode of expression, he intimates that God, along with a very abundant supply of all good things, communicates to him also inward vigour, that he may enjoy them; and thus his strength was as it were continually renewed. From the comparison of the eagle, the Jews have

[1] "A grand' peine osent-ils manger à demi leur saoul."—*Fr.*

[2] "Abu Walid mentions two interpretations: 1. That of our English translators; 2. That which takes עדיך in the sense of *ornament*, 'who multiplieth thy adorning with good,' *i. e.*, 'who abundantly adorneth thee with good.' Aben Ezra approves the notion of *ornament*, but applies it to the soul, the ornament of the body, *i. e.*, 'who satisfieth thy soul with good.'"—*Hammond.* The Septuagint reads, ἐπιθυμίαν σου, "thy desire," or "sensitive appetite," the satisfying of which is the providing for the body all the good things it stands in need of, and thus it is equivalent to "satisfying," or "filling the mouth," the organ for conveying nourishment to the body. Kimchi understands the phrase as expressing David's recovery from sickness. In sickness the soul abhorreth bread, and even dainty meat, Job xxxiii. 20. The physician, too, limits the diet of the patient, and prescribes things which are nauseous to the palate. This commentator, therefore, supposes that David here describes the blessing of health, by *his mouth being filled with good things.*

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taken occasion to invent, for the purpose of explanation, a fabulous story. Although they know not even the first elements of any science, yet so presumptuous are they, that whatever may be the matter treated of, they never hesitate to attempt to explain it, and whenever they meet with any thing which they do not understand, there is no figment so foolish that they do not bring forward, as if it were an oracle of God. Thus, for expounding the present passage, they give out that eagles, every tenth year, ascend to the elemental fire, that their feathers may be burnt,[1] and that then they plunge themselves into the sea, and immediately new feathers grow upon them. But we may easily gather the simple meaning of the Prophet from the nature of the eagle, as described by philosophers, and which is well-known from observation. That bird continues fresh and vigorous, even to extreme old age, unenfeebled by years, and exempt from disease, until it finally dies of hunger. That it is long-lived is certain; but at last, its beak or bill grows so great that it cannot any longer take food, and, consequently, is forced to suck blood, or to nourish itself by drinking. Hence the ancient proverb in reference to old men who are addicted to drinking, *The eagle's old age;* for necessity then constrains eagles to drink much. But as drink alone is insufficient to maintain life, they die rather through hunger, than fail by the natural decay of strength.[2] Now we perceive, without the help of

[1] "Afin que leurs plumes soyent bruslees."—*Fr.*

[2] What Calvin here asserts of the eagle has as little foundation in truth as the Jewish fiction which he justly discards. Augustine's explanation of the renewal of the youth of the eagle is equally fabulous. He affirms that in its old age its beak grows out so long, and becomes so incurvated, as to hinder it from taking food, thus endangering its life, but that it removes the excrescence, by striking its beak against a stone, so that it is enabled to take its ordinary food, and becomes young again. "There are," says Dr Adam Clarke, "as many legends of the eagle among the ancient writers as there are in the Kalendar of some saints, and all *equally true.* Even among modern divines, Bible-Dictionary men, and such like, the most ridiculous tales concerning this bird continue to be propagated; and no small portion of them have been crowded into comments on this very verse." Of these "legends of the eagle," the accounts given of it by the Jewish commentators, by Calvin himself, and by Augustine, are a specimen; for they are altogether unsupported from its natural history. The Psalmist, in speaking of the renewing of its youth, we conceive refers simply to the changing of its feathers. Like all other

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any invented story, the genuine meaning of the Prophet to be, that as eagles always retain their vigour, and even in their old age are still youthful, so the godly are sustained by a secret influence derived from God, by which they continue in the possession of unimpaired strength. They are not always, it is true, full of bodily vigour while in this world, but rather painfully drag on their lives in continual weakness; still what is here said applies to them in a certain sense. This unquestionably is common to all in general, that they have been brought out of the grave, and have experienced God to be bountiful to them in innumerable ways. Were each of them duly to reflect how much he is indebted to God, he would say with good reason that *his mouth is filled with good things;* just as David, in Ps. xl. 5, and cxxxix. 18, confesses that he was unable to reckon up the Divine benefits, because "they are more in number than the sands of the sea." Did not our own perverseness blind our understandings, we would see that, even in famine, we are furnished with food in such a manner, as that God shows us the manifold riches of his goodness. With regard to the renovation of our strength, the meaning is, that since, when our outward man decays, we are renewed to a better life, we have no reason to be troubled at the giving way of our strength, especially when he sustains us by his Spirit under the weakness and languishing of our mortal frames.

birds, the eagle has its annual moulting season, in which it casts its old feathers, and is furnished with a new stock. When its plumage is thus renewed, its appearance becomes more youthful and beautiful, while, at the same time, its vigour and liveliness are improved. In like manner, by the communications of Divine grace, the spiritual beauty, strength, and activity of the people of God are increased. Although any other bird would have served the Psalmist's purpose, yet he may have preferred the eagle, not only because it is the king of birds, superior to others of the feathered tribe in size, strength, and vivacity, but because it retains its vigour to a protracted old age, and preserves its youthful appearance to the last by the frequent change of its plumage. The Prophet Isaiah uses the same allusion, to illustrate the perseverance of the saints in holiness, (chap. xl. 31:) "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." The eagle seems to have borrowed its Hebrew name נֶשֶׁר, *nesher*, from the shedding of its plumage. Its root is the Chaldee verb נְשַׁר, *nashar*, *decidit*, *defluxit*, *he fell*, *he shed*. "The name agrees with שׁוּר, *to look at*," says Bythner, "because the eagle can look at the sun with a straight and steady gaze; also with יָשַׁר, *to be straight*, because it flies in a straight course."

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6. *Jehovah executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*
7. *He made known his ways to Moses, his doings to the children of Israel.*
8. *Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness.*

6. *Jehovah executeth righteousness.* David having recounted the Divine benefits bestowed upon himself, now passes from this personal consideration to take a wider view of the subject. There is, however, no doubt that when he declares God to be the succourer of *the oppressed*, he includes himself among the number, for he had enjoyed the Divine help under many persecutions; and, from his own experience, he describes the character in which God is accustomed to manifest himself towards all who are unrighteously afflicted. As the faithful, while in this world, are always living among wolves, by using the plural number, he celebrates a variety of deliverances, to teach us that it is God's ordinary work to succour his servants whenever he sees them injuriously treated. Hence we are taught to exercise patience when we find that God takes it upon him to avenge our wrongs, and that he covers us with the shield of his justice, or defends us with the sword of his judgment, as often as we are assaulted wrongfully.

7. *He hath made known his ways to Moses.* David now speaks in the name of the chosen people; and this he does very suitably, being led to it by the consideration of the benefits which God had bestowed upon himself. Convinced that it was only as a member of the Church that he had been enriched with so many blessings, he immediately carries back his contemplations to the common covenant made with the people of Israel. He, however, continues the same train of thought as in the preceding verse; for these *ways*, which he says had been shown to Moses, were nothing else than the deliverance wrought for the people until they entered the promised land. He selected this as an instance of God's righteousness and judgment, surpassing all others, to prove

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that God always shows himself righteous in succouring those who are oppressed. But since this instance depended upon the Divine promise, he doubtless has an eye principally to it; his language implying that God's righteousness was clearly demonstrated and seen in the history of the chosen people, whom he had adopted, and with whom he had entered into covenant. God is said to have made known his ways first to Moses, who was his servant and messenger, and afterwards to all the people. Moses is here represented as invested with the office to which he was Divinely appointed; for it was God's will to be made known to the people by the hand and working of that distinguished man. The *ways*, then, and the *doings of God*, are his rising up with wonderful power to deliver the people, his leading them through the Red Sea, and his manifesting his presence with them by many signs and miracles. But as all this flowed from the free covenant, David exhorts himself and others to give thanks to God for having chosen them to be his peculiar people, and for enlightening their minds by the truths of his law. Man, without the knowledge of God, being the most miserable object that can be imagined, the discovery which God has been pleased to make to us in his Word, of his fatherly love, is an incomparable treasure of perfect happiness.

8. *Jehovah is merciful and gracious.* David seems to allude to the exclamation of Moses, recorded in Exodus xxxiv. 6, where the nature of God, revealed in a remarkable way, is more clearly described than in other places. When Moses was admitted to take a nearer view of the Divine glory than was usually obtained, he exclaimed upon beholding it, "O God! merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, slow to wrath, and abundant in goodness." As, therefore, he has summarily comprehended in that passage all that is important for us to know concerning the Divine character, David happily applies these terms, by which God is there described, to his present purpose. His design is to ascribe entirely to the goodness of God the fact that the Israelites, who by their own wickedness forfeited from time to time their relation to Him, as his adopted people, nevertheless continued in that

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relation. Farther, we must understand in general, that the true knowledge of God corresponds to what faith discovers in the written Word; for it is not his will that we should search into his secret essence, except in so far as he makes himself known to us, a point worthy of our special notice. We see that whenever God is mentioned, the minds of men are perversely carried away to cold speculations, and fix their attention on things which can profit them nothing; while, in the meantime, they neglect those manifestations of his perfections which meet our eyes, and which afford a vivid reflection of his character. To whatever subjects men apply their minds, there is none from which they will derive greater advantage than from continual meditation on his wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and mercy; and especially the knowledge of his goodness is fitted both to build up our faith, and to illustrate his praises. Accordingly, Paul, in Eph. iii. 18, declares that our height, length, breadth, and depth, consists in knowing the unspeakable riches of grace, which have been manifested to us in Christ. This also is the reason why David, copying from Moses, magnifies by a variety of terms the mercy of God. In the first place, as we have no worse fault than that devilish arrogance which robs God of his due praise, and which yet is so deeply rooted in us, that it cannot be easily eradicated; God rises up, and that he may bring to nought the heaven-daring presumption of the flesh, asserts in lofty terms his own mercy, by which alone we stand. Again, when we ought to rely upon the grace of God, our minds tremble or waver, and there is nothing in which we find greater difficulty than to acknowledge that He is merciful to us. David, to meet and overcome this doubting state of mind, after the example of Moses, employs these synonymous terms: first, that God is merciful; secondly, that he is gracious; thirdly, that he patiently and compassionately bears with the sins of men; and, lastly, that he is abundant in mercy and goodness.

9. *He will not always chide: nor will he keep his anger for ever.*
10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

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11. *For in proportion to the height of the heavens above the earth has been the greatness of his goodness*[1] *upon*[2] *them that fear him.*

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

9. *He will not always chide.* David, from the attributes ascribed to God in the preceding verse, draws the conclusion, that when God has been offended, he will not be irreconcilable, since, from his nature, he is always inclined to forgive. It was necessary to add this statement; for our sins would be continually shutting the gate against his goodness were there not some way of appeasing his anger. David tacitly intimates that God institutes an action against sinners to lay them low under a true sense of their guilt; and that yet he recedes from it whenever he sees them subdued and humbled. God speaks in a different manner in Gen. vi. 3, where he says, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with man," because the wickedness of men being fully proved, it was then time to condemn them. But here David maintains that God will not always chide, because so easy is he to be reconciled, and so ready to pardon, that he does not rigidly exact from us what strict justice might demand. To the same purpose is the language in the second clause: *nor will he keep anger for ever.* The

[1] "Ou, il a magnifié sa bonte."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, he hath magnified his goodness."

[2] Hammond prefers reading *above.* "Though על," says he, "signifies *on* and *towards*, as well as *above* or *over*, and may be fitly so rendered, verses 13 and 17, where (as here) God's *mercy* is said to be על, *upon his children*, and על, *upon them that fear him;* yet the comparison that is here made between *the heaven* and *the earth*, and the *height* or excellence of the one על, (not *upon*, but) *above* the other, being answered, in the ὑπερπόδοσις, by the *greatness* or *strength* (so גבר signifies) of God's *mercy*, על יראיו; that phrase must by analogy be rendered *above*, not *upon*, or *towards them that fear him.* And then the meaning must needs be this, that whatsoever our *fear* or *obedience* to God be, his *mercy* towards us is as far *above* the size or proportion of that, as *the heaven is above the earth*, *i. e.*, there is no proportion between them; the one is as a point to that other vast circumference; nay, the difference far greater, as God's *mercy* is infinite, like himself, and so infinitely exceeding the pitiful imperfect degree of our obedience. The other expression that follows verse 12, taken from the distance of the *East from the West*, is pitched upon, says Kimchi, because those two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, being all known and inhabited. From whence it is that geographers reckon that way their longitudes, as from North to South their latitudes."

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expression, *to keep anger for ever*, corresponds with the French phrase, *Je lui garde, Il me l'a gardé*,[1] which we use when the man, who cannot forgive the injuries he has received, cherishes secret revenge in his heart, and waits for an opportunity of retaliation. Now David denies that God, after the manner of men, keeps anger on account of the injuries done to him, since he condescends to be reconciled. It is, however, to be understood that this statement does not represent the state of the Divine mind towards all mankind without distinction: it sets forth a special privilege of the Church; for God is expressly called by Moses, (Deut. v. 9,) "a terrible avenger, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children." But David, passing by unbelievers, upon whom rests the everlasting and unappeasable wrath of God, teaches us how tenderly he pardons his own children, even as God himself speaks in Isaiah, (chap. liv. 7, 8,) "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins.* The Psalmist here proves from experience, or from the effect, what he has stated concerning the Divine character; for it was entirely owing to the wonderful forbearance of God that the Israelites had hitherto continued to exist. Let each of us, as if he had said, examine his own life; let us inquire in how many ways we have provoked the wrath of God? or, rather, do we not continually provoke it? and yet he not only forbears to punish us, but bountifully maintains those whom he might justly destroy.

11. *For in proportion to the height of the heavens above the earth.* The Psalmist here confirms by a comparison the truth that God does not punish the faithful as they have deserved, but, by his mercy, strives against their sins. The form of expression is equivalent to saying that God's mercy towards us is infinite. With respect to the word גבר, *gabar*,

[1] "I am watching him, as he has watched to do a bad turn to me."

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it is of little consequence whether it is taken in a neuter signification, or in a transitive, as is noted on the margin; for in either way the immeasurableness of God's mercy is compared to the vast extent of the world. As the mercy of God could not reach us, unless the obstacle of our guilt were taken away, it is immediately added, (verse 12th,) that God removes our sins as far from us *as the east is distant from the west.* The amount is, that God's mercy is poured out upon the faithful far and wide, according to the magnitude of the world; and that, in order to take away every impediment to its course, their sins are completely blotted out. The Psalmist confirms what I have just now stated, namely, that he does not treat in general of what God is towards the whole world, but of the character in which he manifests himself towards the faithful. Whence also it is evident that he does not here speak of that mercy by which God reconciles us to himself at the first, but of that with which he continually follows those whom he has embraced with his fatherly love. There is one kind of mercy by which he restores us from death to life, while as yet we are strangers to him, and another by which he sustains this restored life; for that blessing would forthwith be lost did he not confirm it in us by daily pardoning our sins. Whence also we gather how egregiously the Papists trifle in imagining that the free remission of sins is bestowed only once, and that afterwards righteousness is acquired or retained by the merit of good works, and that whatever guilt we contract is removed by satisfactions. Here David does not limit to a moment of time the mercy by which God reconciles us to himself in not imputing to us our sins, but extends it even to the close of life. Not less powerful is the argument which this passage furnishes us in refutation of those fanatics who bewitch both themselves and others with a vain opinion of their having attained to perfect righteousness, so that they no longer stand in need of pardon.

13. *As a father is compassionate towards his children, so has Jehovah been compassionate*[1] *towards them that fear him.*

[1] In the French the verb is in the present tense, "So Jehovah is compassionate."

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14. *For he knoweth of what we are made; he hath remembered that we are dust.*
15. *As for man, his days are like the grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*
16. *As soon as the wind passeth over it, it is gone;*[1] *and its place shall know it no more.*

13. *As a father is compassionate towards his children.* The Psalmist not only explains by a comparison what he has already stated, but he at the same time assigns the cause why God so graciously forgives us, which is, because he is *a father*. It is then in consequence of God's having freely and sovereignly adopted us as his children that he continually pardons our sins, and accordingly we are to draw from that fountain the hope of forgiveness. And as no man has been adopted on the ground of his own merit, it follows that sins are freely pardoned. God is compared to earthly fathers, not because he is in every respect like them, but because there is no earthly image by which his unparalleled love towards us can be better expressed. That God's fatherly goodness may not be perverted as an encouragement to sin, David again repeats that God is thus favourable only to those who are his sincere worshippers. It is indeed a proof of no ordinary forbearance for God to "make his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," (Matth. v. 45;) but the subject here treated is the free imputation of the righteousness by which we are accounted the children of God. Now this righteousness is offered only to those who entirely devote themselves to so bountiful a Father, and reverently submit to his word. But as our attainments in godliness in this world, whatever they may be, come far short of perfection, there remains only one pillar on which our salvation can securely rest, and that is the goodness of God.

14. *For he knoweth.* David here annihilates all the worth

[1] It has been supposed that there is here a reference to that pestilential destructive wind of the East, called the Simoon, which, from its extreme heat, destroys at once every green thing. Disease and death overtake man, and reduce him to his original dust, as surely and speedily as this scorching wind blasts the tender flower.

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which men would arrogate to themselves, and asserts that it is the consideration of our misery, and that alone, which moves God to exercise patience towards us. This again we ought carefully to mark, not only for the purpose of subduing the pride of our flesh, but also that a sense of our unworthiness may not prevent us from trusting in God. The more wretched and despicable our condition is, the more inclined is God to show mercy, for the remembrance that we are clay and dust is enough to incite him to do us good.

To the same purpose is the comparison immediately following, (verse 15,) that all the excellency of man withers away like a fading flower at the first blast of the wind. Man is indeed improperly said *to flourish.* But as it might be alleged that he is, nevertheless, distinguished by some endowment or other, David grants that he flourishes like the grass, instead of saying, as he might justly have done, that he is a vapour or shadow, or a thing of nought. Although, as long as we live in this world, we are adorned with natural gifts, and, to say nothing of other things, "live, and move, and have our being in God," (Acts xvii. 28;) yet as we have nothing except what is dependent on the will of another, and which may be taken from us every hour, our life is only a show or phantom that passes away. The subject here treated, is properly the brevity of life, to which God has a regard in so mercifully pardoning us, as it is said in another psalm:—"He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again," (lxxviii. 39.) If it is asked why David, making no mention of the soul, which yet is the principal part of man, declares us to be dust and clay? I answer, that it is enough to induce God mercifully to sustain us, when he sees that nothing surpasses our life in frailty. And although the soul, after it has departed from the prison of the body, remains alive, yet its doing so does not arise from any inherent power of its own. Were God to withdraw his grace, the soul would be nothing more than a puff or blast, even as the body is dust; and thus there would doubtless be found in the whole man nothing but mere vanity.

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17. *But the goodness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness upon the children's children;*
18. *To those who keep his covenant, and remember his statutes to do them.*

17. *But the goodness of Jehovah, &c.* The Psalmist leaves nothing to men to rely upon but the mercy of God; for it would be egregious folly to seek a ground of confidence in themselves. After having shown the utter emptiness of men, he adds the seasonable consolation, that, although they have no intrinsic excellence, which does not vanish into smoke, yet God is an inexhaustible fountain of life, to supply their wants. This contrast is to be particularly observed; for whom does he thus divest of all excellence? The faithful who are regenerated by the Spirit of God, and who worship him with true devotion, these are the persons whom he leaves nothing on which their hope may rest but the mere goodness of God. As the Divine goodness is everlasting, the weakness and frailty of the faithful does not prevent them from boasting of eternal salvation to the close of life, and even in death itself. David does not confine their hope within the limits of time: he views it as commensurate in duration with the grace on which it is founded. To *goodness* is subjoined *righteousness*, a word, as we have had occasion frequently to observe before, denoting the protection by which God defends and preserves his own people. He is then called righteous, not because he rewards every man according to his desert, but because he deals faithfully with his saints, in spreading the hand of his protection over them. The Prophet has properly placed this righteousness after goodness, as being the effect of goodness. He also asserts that it extends to the children and children's children, according to these words in Deut. vii. 9, "God keepeth mercy to a thousand generations." It is a singular proof of his love that he not only receives each of us individually into his favour, but also herein associates with us our offspring, as it were by hereditary right, that they may be partakers of the same adoption. How shall He cast us off, who, in receiving our children and

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children's children into his protection, shows to us in their persons how precious our salvation is in his sight?

Farther, as nothing is more easy than for hypocrites to flatter themselves under a false pretext, that they are in favour with God, or for degenerate children groundlessly to apply to themselves the promises made to their fathers, it is again stated, by way of exception, in the 18th verse, that God is merciful only to *those who*, on their part, *keep his covenant*, which the unbelieving make of none effect by their wickedness. The *keeping*, or *observing of the covenant*, which is here put instead of the *fear of God*, mentioned in the preceding verse, is worthy of notice; for thus David intimates that none are the true worshippers of God but those who reverently obey his Word. Very far from this are the Papists, who, thinking themselves equal to the angels in holiness, nevertheless shake off the yoke of God, like wild beasts, by trampling under foot his Holy Word. David, therefore, rightly judges of men's godliness, by their submitting themselves to the Word of God, and following the rule which he has prescribed to them. As the covenant begins with a solemn article containing the promise of grace, faith and prayer are required, above all things, to the proper keeping of it. Nor is the additional clause superfluous—*who remember his statutes;* for, although God is continually putting us in mind of them, yet we soon slide away to worldly cares—are confused by a multiplicity of avocations, and are lulled asleep by many allurements. Thus forgetfulness extinguishes the light of truth, unless the faithful stir up themselves from time to time. David tells us that this remembrance of God's statutes has an invigorating effect when men employ themselves in doing them. Many are sufficiently forward to discourse upon them with their tongues whose feet are very slow, and whose hands are well nigh dead, in regard to active service.

19. *Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

20. *Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, who are mighty in strength, who do his commandment, in hearing*[1] *the voice of his word.*

[1] In the French version it is "en obeissant," "in obeying." Ham-

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21. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts; ye his ministers, who do his pleasure.*
22. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his works in all places of his dominion: bless Jehovah, O my soul!*

19. *Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens.* David having recounted the benefits by which God lays each of us in particular, and also the whole Church, under obligation to him, now extols in general his infinite glory. The amount is, that whenever God is mentioned, men should learn to ascend in their contemplations above the whole world, because his majesty transcends the heavens; and they should farther learn not to measure his power by that of man, since it has under its control all kingdoms and dominions. That none may think that earthly creatures only are here put in subjection to God, the Psalmist chiefly addresses the angels. In calling upon them to join in praising God, he teaches both himself and all the godly, that there is not a better nor a more desirable exercise than to praise God, since there is not a more excellent service in which even the angels are employed. The angels are doubtless too willing and prompt in the discharge of this duty, to stand in need of incitement from us. With what face then, it may be said, can we, whose slothfulness is so great, take it upon us to exhort them? But although these exalted beings run swiftly before us, and we with difficulty come lagging after them, yet David enjoins them to sing God's praises for our sake, that by their example he may awaken us from our drowsiness. The object he has in view, as I have adverted to before, is to be noted, which is, by addressing his discourse to the angels to teach us, that the highest end which they propose to themselves is to advance the divine glory. Accordingly, while in one sentence he clothes them with *strength*, in the immediately following, he

mond reads, "at hearing;" and observes—"The sense of לשמע in this place seems best expressed by the Arabic, 'as soon as they hear;' for that is the character of the angels' obedience, that as soon as they hear the voice of God's word, as soon as his will is revealed to them, they promptly and presently obey it. The Chaldee renders it, 'at his voice being heard;' and the LXX. τοῦ ἀκοῦσαι, 'as they hear,' or 'as soon as they hear.'"

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describes them as hanging on God's word, waiting for his orders,—*Ye who do his commandment.* However great the power, as if he had said, with which you are endued, you reckon nothing more honourable than to obey God. And it is not only said that they execute God's commandments, but to express more distinctly the promptitude of their obedience, it is asserted, that they are always ready to perform whatever he commands them.

21. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts.* By *hosts* is not to be understood the stars, as some explain it. The subject of the preceding verse is still continued. Nor is the repetition superfluous; for the word *hosts* teaches us that there are myriads of myriads who stand before the throne of God, ready to receive every intimation of his will. Again, they are called *his ministers who do his pleasure,* to intimate to us, that they are not there intent in idly beholding God's glory, but that having been appointed as our ministers and guardians, they are always ready for their work. Instead of *word,* the term *pleasure* is here used, and both are employed with much propriety; for although the sun, the moon, and the stars, observe the laws which God has ordained for them, yet being without understanding, they cannot properly be said to obey his word and his voice. The term *obey* is indeed sometimes transferred to the mute and insensible parts of *creation.*[1] It is, however, only in a metaphorical sense that they can be said *to hearken to God's voice,* when by a secret instinct of nature they fulfil his purposes. But this in the proper sense is true of angels, who actively obey him upon their understanding from his sacred mouth what he would have them to do. The word *pleasure* expresses more plainly a joyful and cheerful obedience, implying that the angels not only obey God's commandments, but also willingly and with the greatest delight receive the intimations of his will, that they may perform what he would have them to do. Such is the import of the Hebrew noun, as has been stated elsewhere.

[1] "Aux creatures muetes et insensibles."—*Fr.*

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22. *Bless Jehovah, all ye his works.* The Psalmist in conclusion addresses all creatures; for although they may be without speech and understanding, yet they ought in a manner to re-echo the praises of their Creator. This he does on our account, that we may learn that there is not a corner in heaven or on earth where God is not praised. We have less excuse, if, when all the works of God by praising their Maker reproach us for our sloth, we do not at least follow their example. The express mention of *all places of his dominion,* seems to be intended to stir up the faithful to greater ardour in this exercise; for if even those countries where his voice is unheard ought not to be mute in his praise, how can we lawfully remain silent to whom he opens his mouth, anticipating us by his own sacred voice? In short, David shows that his design in recounting God's benefits, and magnifying the extent of his empire, was to animate himself the more to the exercise of praising him.

PSALM CIV.

This psalm differs from the preceding, inasmuch as it neither treats of the special benefits which God bestows upon his Church, nor lifts us up to the hope of the heavenly life, but by presenting to us a lively image of his wisdom, power, and goodness in the creation of the world, and in the order of nature, encourages us to praise him for the manifestation he has made of himself as a father to us in this frail and perishable life.[1]

[1] "For regularity of composition, richness of imagery, sublimity of sentiment, and elegance and perspicuity of diction, this hymn is perhaps the principal poem in the whole collection of these inspired songs. As there is no allusion in it to the Mosaic ritual, nor any mention of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, it should seem that it was of an earlier age than the Exodus. It consists of parts sung alternately by two companies. The parts are easily distinguished, inasmuch as one Semichorus always speaks of God in the third person, the other addresses him in the second."—*Horsley.*

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1. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul! O Jehovah my God! thou art exceeding great; thou hast clothed thyself with praise and glory.*
2. *Being arrayed*[1] *with light as with a garment; and spreading out the heavens as a curtain:*
3. *Laying the beams of his upper rooms*[2] *in the waters; making the clouds his chariot; and walking upon the wings of the wind:*
4. *Making the winds his messengers; and his ministers a flaming fire.*

[1] "It is a singular circumstance," says Horsley, "in the composition of this psalm, that each of the parts of the First Semichorus after the first, [that is, verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 19,] begins with a participle. And these participles are accusatives, agreeing with יהוה, the object of the verb ברכי, at the beginning of the whole psalm. Bless Jehovah—putting on—extending—laying—constituting—travelling—making—setting—sending—watering—making—making. Thus, this transitive verb, in the opening of the psalm, extending its government through the successive parts of the same semichorus, except the last, unites them all in one long period. As this singular artifice of composition seems to be the characteristic of a particular species of ode, in this psalm, I have scrupulously conformed to it in my translation, at the expense of the elegance of my English style." Calvin, for the most part, translates these words as participles, but in the nominative case.

[2] "The original word, which comes from עלה, *ascendit*, signifies any *upper room* to which persons ascend. So 2 Sam. xviii. 32, 'he went up to עלית השער, the chamber over the gate.' Accordingly, the LXX. here render it, ὑπερῴου, 'an upper room,' and the Latin, 'superiora ejus,' 'his upper stories.' By עליותיו, therefore, must be meant, though not the supreme, yet the superior or middle region of the air, which is here described as an upper story in a house laid firm with beams, (accounting the earth and the region of air about that as the lower room,) and this floor is here said poetically to be 'laid in the waters,' those waters which (Gen. i.) are above the expansion or lower region of the air, which divides the waters from the waters. This is most evident by verse 13, where God is said to 'water the mountains מעליותיו, *from* these *his upper rooms*, these clouds whence the rain descends.' In them, saith the Psalmist, 'the beams of these upper rooms were laid,' *i.e.*, whereas in the building of an *upper story*, there must be some walls or pillars to support the weight of it, and in that the *beams* are laid, God here by his own miraculous immediate power *laid*, and ever since supported these upper rooms, there being nothing there but *waters* to support them, and those we know the most fluid tottering body, not able to support itself; and therefore that is another work of his divine power, that the *waters* which are so fluid, and unable to contain themselves within their own bounds, should yet hang in the middle of the air, and be as walls or pillars to support that region of air, which is itself another fluid body."—*Hammond.* Fry, after quoting Dr Geddes' version,—"Flooring his chambers with waters," and Bishop Horsley, "Laying the floors of his chambers upon the waters," goes on to say:—"After referring, however, to the different places where the word occurs, and considering the structure of

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1. *Bless Jehovah, O my soul!* After having exhorted himself to praise God, the Psalmist adds, that there is abundant matter for such an exercise; thus indirectly condemning himself and others of ingratitude, if the praises of God, than which nothing ought to be better known, or more celebrated, are buried by silence. In comparing *the light* with which he represents God as *arrayed* to a garment, he intimates, that although God is invisible, yet his glory is conspicuous enough. In respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendour, this is the garment in which He, who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us. The knowledge of this truth is of the greatest importance. If men attempt to reach the infinite height to which God is exalted, although they fly above the clouds, they must fail in the midst of their course. Those who seek to see him in his naked majesty are certainly very foolish. That we may enjoy the sight of him, he must come forth to view with his clothing; that is to say, we must cast our eyes upon the very beautiful fabric of the world in which he wishes to be seen by us, and not be too curious and rash in searching into his secret essence. Now, since God presents himself to us clothed with light, those who are seeking pretexts for their living without the knowledge of him, cannot allege in excuse of their slothfulness, that he is hidden in profound darkness. When it is said that *the heavens are a curtain*, it is not meant that under them God hides himself, but that by them his majesty and glory are displayed; being, as it were, his royal pavilion.

3. *Laying the beams of his chambers in the waters.* David now proceeds to explain at greater length what he had

ancient buildings, I conceive the allusion to be to the roof, or contignated frame of the house. Genesis xix. 8, seems decisive. We seem to lose somewhat of the beauty of the original by translating עליות too literally. It signifies certainly, *upper rooms*, or *stories*; but the allusion is not to these on account of their situation, but as the part of the house principally inhabited by its owner, the lower parts of eastern houses being used for offices.—See Parkhurst and authors there quoted: compare Ps. xviii., 'He set darkness his veil around him,—his canopy the waters and thick mists of the clouds.'" Fry's translation is, "And framing his habitation with waters."

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briefly stated under the figure of God's raiment. The scope of the passage is shortly this, that we need not pierce our way above the clouds for the purpose of finding God, since he meets us in the fabric of the world, and is everywhere exhibiting to our view scenes of the most vivid description. That we may not imagine that there is any thing in Him derived, as if, by the creation of the world, he received any addition to his essential perfection and glory, we must remember that he clothes himself with this robe for our sake. The metaphorical representation of God, as *laying the beams of his chambers in the waters*, seems somewhat difficult to understand; but it was the design of the prophet, from a thing incomprehensible to us, to ravish us with the greater admiration. Unless beams be substantial and strong, they will not be able to sustain even the weight of an ordinary house. When, therefore, God makes the waters the foundation of his heavenly palace, who can fail to be astonished at a miracle so wonderful? When we take into account our slowness of apprehension, such hyperbolical expressions are by no means superfluous; for it is with difficulty that they awaken and enable us to attain even a slight knowledge of God.

What is meant by his *walking upon the wings of the wind*, is rendered more obvious from the following verse, where it is said, that *the winds are his messengers*. God rides on the clouds, and is carried upon the wings of the wind, inasmuch as he drives about the winds and clouds at his pleasure, and by sending them hither and thither as swiftly as he pleases, shows thereby the signs of his presence. By these words we are taught that the winds do not blow by chance, nor the lightnings flash by a fortuitous impulse, but that God, in the exercise of his sovereign power, rules and controls all the agitations and disturbances of the atmosphere. From this doctrine a twofold advantage may be reaped. In the first place, if at any time noxious winds arise, if the south wind corrupt the air, or if the north wind scorch the corn, and not only tear up trees by the root, but overthrow houses, and if other winds destroy the fruits of the earth, we ought to tremble under these scourges of Providence. In the

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second place, if, on the other hand, God moderate the excessive heat by a gentle cooling breeze, if he purify the polluted atmosphere by the north wind, or if he moisten the parched ground by south winds; in this we ought to contemplate his goodness.

As the apostle, who writes to the Hebrews, (chap. i. 7,) quotes this passage, and applies it to the angels, both the Greek and Latin expositors have almost unanimously considered David as here speaking allegorically. In like manner, because Paul, in quoting Psalm xix. 4, in his Epistle to the Romans, (chap. x. 18,) seems to apply to the apostles what is there stated concerning the heavens, the whole psalm has been injudiciously expounded as if it were an allegory.[1] The design of the apostle, in that part of the Epistle to the Hebrews referred to, was not simply to explain the mind of the prophet in this place; but since God is exhibited to us, as it were, visibly in a mirror, the apostle very properly lays down the analogy between the obedience which the winds manifestly and perceptibly yield to God, and that obedience which he receives from the angels. In short, the meaning is, that as God makes use of the winds as his messengers, turns them hither and thither, calms and raises them whenever he pleases, that by their ministry he may declare his power, so the angels were created to execute his commands. And certainly we profit little in the contemplation of universal nature, if we do not behold with the eyes of faith that spiritual glory of which an image is presented to us in the world.

5. *He hath founded the earth upon its foundations, so that it shall not be moved for ever.*
6. *He hath covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters shall stand above the mountains.*
7. *At thy rebuke they shall flee; at the voice of thy thunder they shall haste away.*[2]

[1] See vol. i. p. 314.

[2] "The waters, by a beautiful prosopopœia, are supposed to be put into a panic at the voice of Jehovah. See Ps. lxxvii. 16."—*Dimock.*

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8. *The mountains shall ascend, and the valleys shall descend*[1] *to the place which thou hast founded for them.*
9. *Thou hast fixed a bound over which they shall not pass; they shall not return to cover the earth.*

5. *He hath founded the earth upon its foundations.* Here the prophet celebrates the glory of God, as manifested in the stability of the earth. Since it is suspended in the midst of the air, and is supported only by pillars of water, how does it keep its place so stedfastly that it cannot be moved? This I indeed grant may be explained on natural principles; for the earth, as it occupies the lowest place, being the centre

[1] Calvin here renders *mountains* and *valleys* in the nominative case. In our English version they are rendered in the accusative: "They go up by the mountains, they go down by the valleys." "It is not here certain," says Hammond, "whether הרים, *mountains*, and בקעות, *valleys* or *plains*, be to be read in the nominative or in the accusative case. If they be in the nominative, then we must read as in a parenthesis, ('the mountains ascend, the plains or valleys sink down,') joining the end of the verse, 'unto the place,' &c. to 'haste away,' verse 7, thus: 'The waters once stood above the mountains,—those places which now are such;—but at the uttering God's *voice*, they fled and hasted away (the mountains ascending and the valleys descending) unto the place which thou hast prepared for them.' Thus the LXX. and Latin understand it, ἀναβαίνουσιν ὄρη, καταβαίνουσι πεδία, 'ascendunt montes, et descendunt campi,' 'the mountains ascend, and the plains descend,' referring to the change that was made in the earth from being perfectly round and encompassed with waters, into that inequality wherein now it is, great mountains in some parts, and great cavities in other parts, wherein the waters were disposed, which before covered the face of the earth. But they may be more probably in the accusative case, and then מים, the 'waters,' verse 6, which were understood, verse 7, though not mentioned, (for it was the waters that there fled and hasted away,) must be here continued also, viz., that 'the waters יעלו, ascend,' or 'climb the mountains,' and ירדו, 'descend,' or 'fall down upon the valleys,' or 'fissures,' or 'hollow places,' ditches, and the like receptacles of waters, (for so בקוע now signifies among the Rabbins.) And this sense the Chaldee follows, 'They ascend from the abyss to the mountains, and they descend into the valleys, to the place,' &c. And this is the clearest exposition of it, rendering an account of the course of *waters*, since the gathering of them together in the ocean, that from thence they are, by the power of God, directed to pass through subterranean *meatus* to the uppermost parts of the earth, the hills and mountains, where they break forth in springs, and then, by their natural weight, descend, and either find or make channels, by which they run into the ocean again, that מקום, *place*, which God hath hewed out as a receptacle for them; and by their thus passing, they are profitable for the use of men, in watering the cattle, and the fruits that grow in the earth, verse 10, &c."

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of the world, naturally settles down there. But even in this contrivance there shines forth the wonderful power of God. Again, if the waters are higher than the earth, because they are lighter, why do they not cover the whole earth round about? Certainly the only answer which philosophers can give to this is, that the tendency of the waters to do so is counteracted by the providence of God, that a dwelling-place might be provided for man. If they do not admit that the waters are restrained by the determinate appointment of God, they betray not only their depravity and unthankfulness, but also their ignorance, and are altogether barbarous. The prophet, therefore, not without reason, recounts among the miracles of God, that which would be to us wholly incredible, did not even experience show its truth. We are very base indeed if, taught by such undoubted a proof, we do not learn that nothing in the world is stable except in as far as it is sustained by the hand of God. The world did not originate from itself, consequently, the whole order of nature depends on nothing else than his appointment, by which each element has its own peculiar property. Nor is the language of the prophet to be viewed merely as an exhortation to give thanks to God; it is also intended to strengthen our confidence in regard to the future, that we may not live in the world in a state of constant fear and anxiety, as we must have done had not God testified that he has given the earth for a habitation to men. It is a singular blessing, which he bestows upon us, in his causing us to dwell upon the earth with undisturbed minds, by giving us the assurance that he has established it upon everlasting pillars. Although cities often perish by earthquakes, yet the body of the earth itself remains. Yea, all the agitations which befall it more fully confirm to us the truth, that the earth would be swallowed up every moment were it not preserved by the secret power of God.

6. *He hath covered it with the deep as with a garment.* This may be understood in two ways, either as implying that now the sea covers the earth as a garment, or that at the begin-

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ning, before God by his omnipotent word had gathered the waters together into one place, the earth was covered with the deep. But the more suitable sense appears to be, that the sea is now the covering of the earth. At the first creation the deep was not so much a garment as a grave, inasmuch as nothing bears less resemblance to the adorning of apparel than the state of confused desolation and shapeless chaos in which the earth then was. Accordingly, in my judgment, there is here celebrated that wonderful arrangement by which the deep, although without form, is yet the garment of the earth. But as the context seems to lead to a different view, interpreters are rather inclined to explain the language as denoting, That the earth was covered with the deep before the waters had been collected into a separate place. This difficulty is however easily solved, if the words of the prophet, *The waters shall stand above the mountains*, are resolved into the potential mood thus, *The waters would stand above the mountains*; which is sufficiently vindicated from the usage of the Hebrew language. I have indeed no doubt that the prophet, after having said that God had clothed the earth with waters, adds, by way of exposition, that the waters would stand above the mountains, were it not that they flee away at God's rebuke. Whence is it that the mountains are elevated, and that the valleys sink down, but because bounds are set to the waters, that they may not return to overwhelm the earth? The passage then, it is obvious, may very properly be understood thus,—that the sea, although a mighty deep, which strikes terror by its vastness, is yet as a beautiful garment to the earth. The reason of the metaphor is, because the surface of the earth stands uncovered. The prophet affirms that this does not happen by chance; for, if the providence of God did not restrain the waters, would they not immediately rush forth to overwhelm the whole earth? He, therefore, speaks advisedly when he maintains that the appearance of any part of the earth's surface is not the effect of nature, but is an evident miracle. Were God to give loose reins to the sea, the waters would suddenly cover the mountains. But now, fleeing at God's rebuke, they

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retire to a different quarter. By *the rebuke of God, and the voice of his thunder*, is meant the awful command of God, by which he restrains the violent raging of the sea. Although at the beginning, by his word alone, he confined the sea within determinate bounds, and continues to this day to keep it within them, yet if we consider how tumultuously its billows cast up their foam when it is agitated, it is not without reason that the prophet speaks of it, as kept in check by the powerful command of God; just as, both in Jeremiah, (chap. v. 22,) and in Job, (chap. xxviii. 25,) God, with much sublimity, commends his power, as displayed in the ocean. *The ascending of the mountains*, and *the descending of the valleys*, are poetical figures, implying, that unless God confined the deep within bounds, the distinction between mountains and valleys, which contributes to the beauty of the earth, would cease to exist, for it would engulf the whole earth. It is said that God *has founded a place for the valleys;* for there would be no dry land at the foot of the mountains, but the deep would bear sway, did not God command the space there to be unoccupied by the sea, as it were contrary to nature.

9. *Thou hast set a bound which they shall not pass.* The miracle spoken of is in this verse amplified, from its perpetuity. Natural philosophers are compelled to admit, and it is even one of their first principles, that the water is circular, and occupies the region intermediate between the earth and the air. It is entirely owing to the providence of God, that a part of the earth remains dry and fit for the habitation of men. This is a fact of which mariners have the most satisfactory evidence. Yea, were even the rudest and most stupid of our race only to open their eyes, they would behold in the sea mountains of water elevated far above the level of the land. Certainly no banks, and even no iron gates, could make the waters, which in their own nature are fluid and unstable, keep together and in one place, as we see to be the case. I have just now said that earthquakes, which bring destruction upon some places, leave the

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globe, upon the whole, as it was before; and in like manner, although the sea, in some parts of the world, overpasses its boundaries, yet the law, which confines it within certain limits, stands fast, that the earth may be a fit habitation for men. The Baltic Sea, in our own time, inundated large tracts of land, and did great damage to the Flemish people and other neighbouring nations. By an instance of this kind we are warned what would be the consequence, were the restraint imposed upon the sea, by the hand of God, removed. How is it that we have not thereby been swallowed up together, but because God has held in that outrageous element by his word? In short, although the natural tendency of the waters is to cover the earth, yet this will not happen, because God has established, by his word, a counteracting law, and as his truth is eternal, this law must remain stedfast.

10. *Sending out springs by the valleys, which shall run between*[1] *the hills.*
11. *All the beasts of the field shall drink thereof: the wild asses*[2] *shall quench*[3] *their thirst.*
12. *Nigh them the fowls of the air shall dwell, from the midst of the branches they shall send out their voice.*[4]

[1] In our English version it is *among;* but *between* is the more proper rendering. "בין," says Hammond, "must be rendered, not *among* but *between*, *ἀναμέσον*, say the LXX., to denote the hollow receptacles for waters betwixt the hills, or risings of the ground on both sides."

[2] The wild ass differs from the tame only by being stronger and nimbler, more courageous and lively. Wild asses are still found in considerable numbers in the deserts of Great Tartary, in Persia, Syria, the islands of the Archipelago, and throughout Mauritania. They are gregarious, and have been known to assemble by hundreds and thousands. It has been observed of these animals that, though dull and stupid, they are remarkable for their instinct in discovering in the arid desert the way to rivers, brooks, or fountains of water, so that the thirsty traveller has only to observe and follow their steps, in order to his being led to the cooling stream.

[3] The literal rendering of the Hebrew word ישברן, *yeshberu*, is *shall break*, being derived from שבר, *shabar*, *to break*. As applied to hunger, it must signify *to allay*, or, as here, to thirst, it must mean *to quench*. The phrase is communicated to other languages, and is usual among us, who, by *breaking of fasting*, understand eating.

[4] "'From between these boughs or leaves the fowls of the air send out their voice,' not by *singing* only, (for that is peculiar to few,) but by

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13. *Watering the mountains from his chambers : the earth shall be satisfied from the fruit of thy*[1] *works.*
14. *Making grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man : that he may produce bread out of the earth.*
15. *And wine cheereth the heart of man, to make his face to shine with oil, and bread sustaineth man's heart.*[2]

10. *Sending out springs by the valleys.* The Psalmist here describes another instance both of the power and goodness of God, which is, that he makes fountains to gush out in the mountains, and to run down through the midst of the valleys. Although it is necessary for the earth to be dry, to render it a fit habitation for us, yet, unless we had water to drink, and unless the earth opened her veins, all kinds of living creatures would perish. The prophet, therefore, speaks in commendation of that arrangement by which the earth, though dry, yet supplies us with water by its moisture. The word נחלים, *nechalim*, which I have rendered *springs*, is by some translated, *torrents* or *rivers ;* but *springs* is more appropriate. In the same sense it is added immediately after, that *they run among the hills ;* and yet, it is scarcely credible that fountains could spring forth from rocks and stony places. But here it may be asked, why the prophet says that *the beasts of the field quench their thirst*, rather than men, for whose sake the world was created? I would observe, in reply, that he obviously spake in this manner, for the purpose of enhancing the goodness of God, who vouchsafes to extend his care to the brute creation, yea, even to the *wild asses*, under which species are included all other kinds of wild

making any noise that is proper to them."—*Hammond.* On the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses, Dimock observes,—"The murmuring brooks, the great number of beasts and cattle, with the melodious birds, afford a most picturesque scene of rural delight."

[1] In the preceding clause God is spoken of in the third person, and here in the second. The change of persons from the second to the third, and from the third to the second, is very observable throughout this psalm.—See page 143, note.

[2] In the French version it is, "Et le vin qui resjouit le cœur de l'homme, et l'huile pour faire reluire sa face, et le pain *qui* soustient le cœur de l'homme."—"And wine that cheereth the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread *that* sustains the heart of man."

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beasts. And he purposely refers to desert places, that each of us may compare with them the more pleasant, and the cultivated parts of the earth, afterwards mentioned. Rivers run even through great and desolate wildernesses, where the wild beasts enjoy some blessing of God; and no country is so barren as not to have trees growing here and there, on which birds make the air to resound with the melody of their singing. Since even those regions where all lies waste and uncultivated, furnish manifest tokens of the Divine goodness and power, with what admiration ought we to regard that most abundant supply of all good things, which is to be seen in cultivated and favourable regions? Surely in countries where not only one river flows, or where not only grass grows for the feeding of wild beasts, or where the singing of birds is heard not only from a few trees, but where a manifold and varied abundance of good things everywhere presents itself to our view, our stupidity is more than brutish, if our minds, by such manifestations of the goodness of God, are not fixed in devout meditation on his glory.

The same subject is prosecuted in the 13th verse, where it is said *that God watereth the mountains from his chambers.* It is no ordinary miracle that the mountains, which seem to be condemned to perpetual drought, and which, in a manner, are suspended in the air, nevertheless abound in pastures. The prophet, therefore, justly concludes that this fruitfulness proceeds from nothing else but the agency of God, who is their secret cultivator. Labour cannot indeed, in the proper sense, be attributed to God, but still it is not without reason applied to him, for, by merely blessing the earth from the place of his repose, he works more efficaciously than if all the men in the world were to waste themselves by incessant labour.

14. *Making grass to grow for cattle.* The Psalmist now comes to men, of whom God vouchsafes to take a special care as his children. After having spoken of the brute creation, he declares, that corn is produced, and bread made of it, for the nourishment of the human race; and he mentions in ad-

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dition to this, wine and oil, two things which not only supply the need of mankind, but also contribute to their cheerful enjoyment of life. Some understand the Hebrew word לעבדת, *laäbodath*, which I have rendered *for the service*, to denote the labour which men bestow in husbandry; for while grass grows on the mountains of itself, and without human labour, corn and herbs, which are sown, can only be produced, as is well known, by the labour and sweat of men. According to them the meaning is, that God blesses the toil of men in the cultivation of the fields. But this being too strained an interpretation, it is better to understand the word *service*, in the ordinary sense of the term. With respect to the word *bread*, I do not object to the view of those who understand it in a restricted sense, although it probably includes all kinds of food; only I dislike the opinion of those who exclude bread. There is no force in the reason which they allege for taking this view, namely, that in the following verse another use of bread is added, when it is said, that it strengthens the heart of man; for there the same thing is expressed in different words. The prophet, in stating that God causeth the earth to bring forth *herbs* for the support of men, intends to say that the earth supplies them not only with food in corn, but also with other herbs and fruits; for the means of our sustenance is not limited exclusively to one kind of food.

15. *And wine that cheereth the heart of man.* In these words we are taught, that God not only provides for men's necessity, and bestows upon them as much as is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life, but that in his goodness he deals still more bountifully with them by cheering their hearts with wine and oil. Nature would certainly be satisfied with water to drink; and therefore the addition of wine is owing to God's superabundant liberality. The expression, *and oil to make his face to shine*, has been explained in different ways. As sadness spreads a gloom over the countenance, some give this exposition, That when men enjoy the commodities of wine and oil, their faces shine with gladness. Some with more refinement of interpretation, but without foundation,

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refer this to *lamps*. Others, considering the letter מ, *mem*, to be the sign of the comparative degree, take the meaning to be, that wine makes men's faces shine more than if they were anointed with oil. But the prophet, I have no doubt, speaks of unguents, intimating that God not only bestows upon men what is sufficient for their moderate use, but that he goes beyond this, giving them even their delicacies.

The words in the last clause, *and bread that sustains man's heart*, I interpret thus: Bread would be sufficient to support the life of man, but God over and above, to use a common expression, bestows upon them wine and oil. The repetition then of the purpose which bread serves is not superfluous: it is employed to commend to us the goodness of God in his tenderly and abundantly nourishing men as a kind-hearted father does his children. For this reason, it is here stated again, that as God shows himself a foster-father sufficiently bountiful in providing bread, his liberality appears still more conspicuous in giving us dainties.

But as there is nothing to which we are more prone, than to abuse God's benefits by giving way to excess, the more bountiful he is towards men, the more ought they to take care not to pollute, by their intemperance, the abundance which is presented before them. Paul had therefore good reason for giving that prohibition, (Rom. xiii. 14,) "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" for if we give full scope to the desires of the flesh, there will be no bounds. As God bountifully provides for us, so he has appointed a law of temperance, that each may voluntarily restrain himself in his abundance. He sends out oxen and asses into pastures, and they content themselves with a sufficiency; but while furnishing us with more than we need, he enjoins upon us an observance of the rules of moderation, that we may not voraciously devour his benefits; and in lavishing upon us a more abundant supply of good things than our necessities require, he puts our moderation to the test. The proper rule with respect to the use of bodily sustenance, is to partake of it that it may sustain, but not oppress us. The mutual communication of the things need-

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ful for the support of the body, which God has enjoined upon us, is a very good check to intemperance; for the condition upon which the rich are favoured with their abundance is, that they should relieve the wants of their brethren. As the prophet in this account of the divine goodness in providence makes no reference to the excesses of men, we gather from his words that it is lawful to use wine not only in cases of necessity, but also thereby to make us merry. This mirth must however be tempered with sobriety, first, that men may not forget themselves, drown their senses, and destroy their strength, but rejoice before their God, according to the injunction of Moses, (Lev. xxiii. 40;) and, secondly, that they may exhilarate their minds under a sense of gratitude, so as to be rendered more active in the service of God. He who rejoices in this way will also be always prepared to endure sadness, whenever God is pleased to send it. That rule of Paul ought to be kept in mind, (Phil. iv. 12,) "I have learned to abound,—I have learned to suffer want." If some token of the divine anger is manifest, even he who has an overflowing abundance of all kinds of dainty food, will restrict himself in his diet, knowing that he is called to put on sackcloth, and to sit among ashes. Much more ought he whom poverty compels to be temperate and sober, to abstain from such delicacies. In short, if one man is constrained to abstain from wine by sickness, if another has only vapid wine, and a third nothing but water, let each be content with his own lot, and willingly and submissively wean himself from those gratifications which God denies him.

The same remarks apply to oil. We see from this passage that ointments were much in use among the Jews, as well as among the other eastern nations. At the present day, it is different with us, who rather keep ointments for medicinal purposes, than use them as articles of luxury. The prophet, however, says, that oil also is given to men, that they may anoint themselves therewith. But as men are too prone to pleasure, it is to be observed, that the law of temperance ought not to be separated from the beneficence of God, lest they abuse their liberty by indulging in luxurious excess.

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This exception must always be added, that no person may take encouragement from this doctrine to licentiousness.

Moreover, when men have been carefully taught to bridle their lust, it is important for them to know, that God permits them to enjoy pleasures in moderation, where there is the ability to provide them; else they will never partake even of bread and wine with a tranquil conscience; yea, they will begin to scruple about the tasting of water, at least they will never come to the table but in fearfulness. Meanwhile, the greater part of the world will wallow in pleasures without discrimination, because they do not consider what God permits them; for his fatherly kindness should be to us the best mistress to teach us moderation.

16. *The trees of Jehovah*[1] *shall be satiated; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;*
17. *For there the birds build their nests: the stork,*[2] *whose dwelling is the fir-trees.*

[1] "In the Septuagint it is, ξύλα του πεδίου, 'trees of the field;' they, therefore, read עֲצֵי שָׂדִי; and שדי being a name of the Almighty, when differently pointed, thus, שַׁדַּי, was afterwards changed to יהוה, 'Jehovah,' as the text now is. Theodoret notices in his time, that the Hebrew, and other Greek interpreters of it, had ξύλα του κυρίου, 'trees of the Lord.' So was the Hebrew in Jerome's time, who has it *ligna Domini.*"—*Reeves' Collation, &c.*

[2] חסידה, *chasidah*, the original word for *the stork*, is from חסד, *piety, beneficence*, because, says Bythner, "the stork nourishes, supports, and carries on its back, when weary, its aged parents." Storks are a species of birds very numerous in Palestine, and other eastern countries. Doubdan thus speaks of them in his account of a journey from Cana to Nazareth in Galilee, (p. 513,) "All these fields were so filled with flocks of storks, that they appeared quite white with them, there being above a thousand in each flock, and when they rose and hovered in the air they seemed like clouds. The evening they rest in trees." This account is confirmed by Dr Shaw, who informs us, that as he lay at anchor near Mount Carmel, he saw "three flights of them, some of which were more open and scattered, with larger intervals between them; others were closer and more compact, as in the flight of wrens and other birds, each of which took up more than three hours in passing by us, extending itself at the same time more than half a mile in breadth."—See his *Travels*, vol. ii. p. 269. The stork constructs her nest with exquisite skill of dry twigs of trees and coarse grass from the marsh. But instead of confining herself to one situation, she builds it sometimes on the highest parts of

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18. *The high mountains are for the deer ;*[1] *and the rocks are a place of shelter for the hedgehogs.*[2]

old ruins and houses,—sometimes in the canals of ancient aqueducts, and sometimes on the tops of the eastern mosques and dwelling-houses ; so very familiar is she by being never molested, the Mahometans accounting it profane to kill, or even to hurt, or disturb this species of bird, because of their important services in clearing the country of serpents, and other venomous animals, on which they feed. She frequently retires from the noise and bustle of the town to the adjacent field, selecting the highest tree of the forest on which to build her nest, and always preferring the fir, when it is equally suitable to her purpose.—*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 272. Harmer remarks, that חסידה, *chasidah*, seems to signify *the heron* as well as *the stork;* and Dr Adam Clarke is of opinion, that *the heron* is here meant, conceiving the description of its making the fir-tree its house, as other birds make their nests in the cedars of Lebanon, to be more agreeable to its natural history than to that of the stork properly speaking. He farther observes, that Aquila, who has given us an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, and who is said to have been exquisitely skilled in the original language, always understood the *chasidah* to mean *the heron*, rather than *the stork*. "But," he adds, "the two species resemble each other so much, that it is not improbable but one Hebrew word stood for both," and refers to Doubdan, who supposes that storks in Palestine roost in trees.—*Harmer's Observations*, vol. ii. p. 465, and vol. iii. p. 338.

[1] "Ou, chevreux."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, the kids." Calvin, by giving two different translations of the original word, appears to have been at a loss as to the animal meant. "The animal here intended," says Mant, "is the Ibex or Rock Goat, a species of wild goat, deriving its Hebrew name from the wonderful manner in which it *mounts* to the top of the highest rocks, to which quality the sacred writers allude in the other two passages where the word occurs as well as in this.—See 1 Sam. xxiv. 3 ; Job xxxix. 1. To this quality natural historians bear abundant witness. Mr Cox thus describes the action of the Ibex, in ascending the mountains of Switzerland :—' He mounts a perpendicular rock of fifteen feet at three leaps, or rather three successive bounds of five feet each. It does not seem as if he found any footing on the rock, appearing to touch it merely to be repelled, like an elastic substance striking against a hard body. He is not supposed to take more than three successive leaps in this manner. If he is between two rocks which are near each other, and wants to reach the top, he leaps from the side of one rock to the other alternately, till he has obtained the summit.'"

[2] "Ou, connils."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, the conies, *or* rabbits." The Hebrew name of this animal, שפן, *shaphan*, from the verbs שפן, *shaphan*, or טמן, *saphan*, *to hide*, seems to indicate a creature of a timid and harmless disposition. Feeble, and apprehensive of danger, it seeks a shelter among the fissures of the rocks, where it may be concealed from its enemies. To this circumstance allusion is here made ; and it is also referred to by Solomon, (Prov. xxx. 26,) "The shaphans are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." It is evident from these words, that the shaphan is gregarious. What particular animal then is indicated by this name? Calvin, from giving the original term, one translation in the text, and a different one on the margin, seems to have been uncertain as to the species of animal intended, and on this point considerable variety of opinion has obtained. Some copies of the Sep-

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16. *The trees of Jehovah shall be satiated.* The Psalmist again treats of God's general providence in cherishing all the parts of the world. In the first place, he asserts, that by the watering of which he had spoken the trees are satiated, or filled with sap, that thus flourishing they may be a place of abode to the birds. He next declares, that the wild deer and conies have also their places of shelter, to show that no part of the world is forgotten by Him, who is the best of fathers, and that no creature is excluded from his care. The transition which the prophet makes from men to trees is as if he had said, It is not to be wondered at, if God so bountifully nourishes men who are created after his own image, since he does not grudge to extend his care even to trees. By *the trees of the Lord*, is meant those which are high and of surpassing beauty; for God's blessing is more conspicuous in them. It seems scarcely possible for any juice of the earth to reach so great a height, and yet they renew their foliage every year.

tuagint have *hedgehogs*, and others, *hares*, the former being probably the right reading, as the Vulgate agrees with it. Bochart supposed the *jerboa*, or *jumping-mouse*, to be meant. But to this it has been justly objected, that the jerboa always digs its habitation in the smoother places of the desert, especially where the soil is fixed gravel; that it is not gregarious, nor distinguished by feebleness, which it supplies by its wisdom. Nor can it be the coney, or rabbit, that is here referred to; for, instead of seeking a habitation among the rocks, it delights to burrow in the sandy downs; and if it sometimes digs a place of shelter among the rocks, it is only where the openings are filled with earth. It is now pretty generally agreed, that *the shaphan* is the *Daman Israel*, as suggested by Dr Shaw. "The Daman Israel," says this traveller, "is an animal likewise of Mount Lebanus, though common in other places of this country. It is a harmless creature, of the same size and quality with the rabbit, and with the like incurvating posture and disposition of the fore-teeth. But it is of a browner colour with smaller eyes, and a head more pointed, like the marmots. The fore-feet likewise are short, and the hinder are nearly as long in proportion as those of the jerboa. Though this animal is known to burrow sometimes in the ground, yet as its usual residence and refuge is in the holes and clifts of the rocks, we have so far a more presumptive proof, that this creature may be the shaphan of the Scriptures, than the jerboa. I could not learn why it was called *Daman Israel, i.e., Israel's lamb*, as those words are interpreted." Travels, vol. ii. pp. 160, 161. It is called in Amhara, "Ashkoko." Bruce confirms Dr Shaw's opinion. He identifies the animals by the several other particulars mentioned in Scripture, as well as by their attachment to rocks, and their constant residence in holes and caves, as noticed in this psalm. See also Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture, vol. ii. pp. 204–209.

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19. *He hath appointed the moon to distinguish seasons : the sun knoweth his going down.*
20. *Thou makest darkness, and it is night ; wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth.*
21. *The lions roar after their prey, and in seeking their food from God.*[1]
22. *The sun shall rise, and they shall gather themselves together, and lie down in their dens.*[2]
23. *Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labour, until the evening.*

19. *He hath appointed the moon to distinguish seasons.* The Psalmist now comes to another commendation of God's providence as manifested in the beautiful arrangement by which the course of the sun and moon alternately succeeds each other; for the diversity in their mutual changes is so far from producing confusion, that all must easily perceive the impossibility of finding any better method of distinguishing time. When it is said, that the *moon was appointed to distinguish seasons*, interpreters agree that this is to be understood of the ordinary and appointed feasts. The Hebrews having been accustomed to compute their months by the moon, this served for regulating their festival days and assemblies, both sacred and political.[3] The prophet, I have no doubt, by the figure synecdoche, puts

[1] "What is here said of the *lions* peculiarly, that they 'roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God,' may be illustrated by what is observed of those creatures, that to their great strength and greediness and rapacity, they are not proportionably provided with swiftness of body to pursue in the desert those beasts on which they prey, nor yet so quick-scented, as to be able to follow and trace them to their places of repose. It hath therefore been necessary to the providing for these animals, that some supply should be made to these defects by some other way. And it hath been affirmed by some, that their very *roaring* is useful to them for this end, and that when they cannot overtake their prey, they do by that fierce noise so astonish and amaze the poor beasts, that they fall down before them. If this have that truth, which it professes to have, it gives a clear account both of the phrase of *roaring after their prey*, and of *seeking it* from God—of *roaring*, as being able to do nothing else toward the getting it, but only thus to frighten the hearers, and express his own hunger and want."—*Hammond.*

[2] In the French version all the verbs in this verse are translated in the present tense.

[3] "The greatest part of the Jewish feasts, as the New Moon, the Passover, the Pentecost, &c., were governed by the moon."—*Dimock.*

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a part for the whole, intimating, that the moon not only distinguishes the days from the nights, but likewise marks out the festival days, measures years and months, and, in fine, answers many useful purposes, inasmuch as the distinction of times is taken from her course. As to the sentence, *The sun knoweth his going down*, I understand it not only of his daily circuit, but as also denoting that by gradually approaching nearer us at one time, and receding farther from us at another, he knows how to regulate his movements by which to make summer, winter, spring, and autumn. It is farther stated, *that the beasts of the forest creep forth during the night*, because they go out of their dens with fear. Some translate the verb רמש, *ramas*, *to walk*; but its proper signification which I have given is not unsuitable; for although hunger often drives wild beasts into fury, yet they *watch* for the darkness of the night, that they may move abroad from their hiding-places, and on account of this fearfulness they are said to creep forth.

21. *The lions roar after their prey.* Although lions, if hunger compels them, go forth from their dens and roar even at noon-day, yet the prophet describes what is most usually the case. He therefore says, that lions do not venture to go abroad during the daytime, but that, trusting to the darkness of the night, they then sally forth in quest of their prey. Herein is manifested the wonderful providence of God, that a beast so dreadful confines itself within its den, that men may walk abroad with the greater freedom. And if lions sometimes range with greater liberty, this is to be imputed to the fall of Adam, which has deprived men of their dominion over the wild beasts. There are, however, still some remains of the original blessing conferred by God on men, inasmuch as he holds in check so many wild beasts by the light of day, as if by iron cages or chains. The expression, *They seek their food from God*, is not to be understood of their casting themselves upon the care of God, as if they acknowledged him to be their foster-father, but it points out the fact itself, that God in a wonderful manner provides food for such ravenous beasts.

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22. *The sun shall rise.* The Psalmist continues to prosecute the same subject, showing that God so distributes the successions of time, as that the day belongs properly to man. Did not God put a restraint upon so many wild beasts which are hostile to us, the human race would soon become extinct. As wild beasts since the fall of man may seem to be born to do us hurt, and to rend and tear in pieces all whom they meet with, this savage cruelty must be kept under check by the providence of God. And in order to keep them shut up within their dens, the only means which he employs is to inspire them with terror, simply by the light of the sun. This instance of divine goodness, the prophet commends the more on account of its necessity; for were it otherwise, men would have no liberty to go forth to engage in the labours and business of life. Man being thus protected by the light against the violence and injuries of wild beasts, in this is to be seen the unparalleled goodness of God, who in so fatherly a manner has provided for his convenience and welfare.

24. *O Jehovah! how magnificent are thy works! thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is full of thy riches.*
25. *Great is this sea, and wide in extent; therein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great animals.*
26. *There go the ships:*[1] *and the leviathan, which thou hast made to sport itself in it.*

24. *O Jehovah! how magnificent are thy works!* The pro-

[1] Fry reads in the text, "There pass the ships," and at the foot of the page, "There go the whales." "I cannot," says he, "but indulge a conjecture in this place, that either the word we translate *ships* had anciently another meaning, and signified some aquatic animal; or that for אניות, we should read תניתם or תנין: compare Gen. i. 21, 'And God created great whales, תניתם הגדלים, and every living creature that moveth, הרמשת החיה, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind.' It has, however, been thought by some, that not whales, but some large marine animals, known on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, are intended by the term."—"The first line of this verse," says Dimock, "should probably be read in a parenthesis, if it is not an interpolation; and the grammatical construction requires that we should read הלכון. That wonderful piece of mechanism, *a ship*, whereby man becomes the lord of the sea, seems to have been originally constructed under the divine direction.—See Gen. vi. 14."

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phet does not make a full enumeration of the works of God, which would be an endless task, but only touches upon certain particulars, that every one may be led from the consideration of them to reflect the more attentively on that wisdom by which God governs the whole world, and every particular part of it. Accordingly, breaking off his description, he exclaims with admiration,—*How greatly to be praised are thy works!* even as we then only ascribe to God due honour when seized with astonishment, we acknowledge that our tongues and all our senses fail us in doing justice to so great a subject. If a small portion of the works of God make us amazed, how inadequate are our feeble minds to comprehend the whole extent of them! In the first place, it is said, *that God has made all things in wisdom*, and then it is added, *that the earth is full of his riches.* The mention of *wisdom* only is not intended to exclude the divine power, but the meaning is, that there is nothing in the world confused,—that, so far from this, the vast variety of things mixed together in it are arranged with the greatest wisdom, so as to render it impossible for any thing to be added, abstracted, or improved. This commendation is set in opposition to the unhallowed imaginations, which often creep upon us when we are unable to discover the designs of God in his works, as if indeed he were subject to folly like ourselves, so as to be forced to bear the reprehension of those who are blind in the consideration of his works. The prophet also, by the same eulogium, reproves the madness of those who dream, that the world has been brought into its present form by chance, as Epicurus raved about the elements being composed of atoms. As it is an imagination more than irrational to suppose, that a fabric so elegant, and of such surpassing embellishment, was put together by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the prophet here bids us attend more carefully to the wisdom of God, and to that wonderful skill which shines forth in the whole government of the world. Under *riches* are comprehended the goodness and beneficence of God; for it is not on his own account that he has so richly replenished the earth but on ours, that nothing which contributes to our advantage may be wanting. We ought to know, that the earth does not pos-

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sess such fruitfulness and riches of itself, but solely by the blessing of God, who makes it the means of administering to us his bounty.

25. *Great is this sea, and wide in extent.* After having treated of the evidences which the earth affords of the glory of God, the prophet goes down into the sea, and teaches us that it is a new mirror in which may be beheld the divine power and wisdom. Although the sea were not inhabited by fishes, yet the mere view of its vastness would excite our wonder, especially when at one time it swells with the winds and tempests, while at another it is calm and unruffled. Again, although navigation is an art which has been acquired by the skill of men, yet it depends on the providence of God, who has granted to men a passage through the mighty deep. But the abundance and variety of fishes enhance in no small degree the glory of God in the sea. Of these the Psalmist celebrates especially *the leviathan or the whale,*[1] because this animal, though there were no more, presents to our view a sufficient, yea, more than a sufficient, proof of the dreadful power of God, and for the same reason, we have a lengthened account of it in the book of Job. As its movements not only throw the sea into great agitation, but also strike with alarm the hearts of men, the prophet, by the word *sport,* intimates that these its movements are only sport in respect of God; as if he had said, The sea is given to the leviathans, as a field in which to exercise themselves.

27. *All things wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them food in their season.*

28. *Thou shalt give it to them, and they shall gather it: thou shalt open thy hand, and they shall be filled* [or *satisfied*] *with good.*

[1] The leviathan, which is described at large in Job xl., is now generally understood by commentators to be not the whale, but the crocodile, an inhabitant of the Nile. That it should here be numbered with the marine animals, need not surprise us, as the object of the divine poet is merely to display the kingdom of the *watery world.* Of these wide domains the *sea of the Nile* forms, in his view, a part. "נהר transfertur ad omnia flumina majora. Est igitur in specie *Nilus.* Jes. xix. 5; Nah. iii. 8."—*Sim. Lex. Heb.*—See vol. iii. p. 175, n. 1.

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29. *Thou shalt hide thy face, and they shall be afraid: thou shalt take away their spirit, and they shall die, and return to their dust.*

30. *Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created:*[1] *and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.*

27. *All these wait upon thee.* The prophet here again describes God as acting the part of the master of a household, and a foster-father towards all sorts of living creatures, by providing liberally for them. He had said before, that God made food to grow on the mountains for the support of cattle, and that sustenance is ministered to the very lions by the hand of the same God, although they live upon prey. Now he amplifies this wonder of the divine beneficence by an additional circumstance. While the different species of living creatures are almost innumerable, and the number in each species is so great, there is yet not one of them which does not stand in need of daily food. The meaning then of the expression, *All things wait upon thee*, is, that they could not continue in existence even for a few days, unless God were to supply their daily need, and to nourish each of them in particular. We thus see why there is so great a diversity of fruits; for God assigns and appoints to each species of living creatures the food suitable and proper for them. The brute beasts are not indeed endued with reason and judgment to seek the supply of their wants from God, but stooping towards the earth, they seek to fill themselves with food; still the prophet speaks with propriety, when he represents them as waiting upon God; for their hunger must be relieved by his bounty, else they would soon die. Nor is the specification of *the season* when God furnishes them with food superfluous, since God lays up in store for them, that they may have the means of sustenance during the whole course of the year. As the earth in winter shuts up her bowels, what would become of them if he did not provide them with food for a long time? The miracle, then, is the greater from the circumstance, that God, by making the earth

[1] "This alludes to Gen. i. 2, as the continual succession of things is a kind of creation."—*Dimock.*

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fruitful at stated seasons, extends in this way his blessing to the rest of the year which threatens us with hunger and famine. How wretched would we be when the earth in winter shuts up her riches, were not our hearts cheered with the hope of a new increase? In this sense, the Psalmist appropriately affirms, that God *opens his hand.* If wheat should grow up daily, God's providence would not be so manifest. But when the earth becomes barren, it is as if God shut his hand. Whence it follows, that when he makes it fruitful, he, so to speak, stretches out his hand from heaven to give us food. Now if he supply wild and brute beasts with sustenance in due season, by which they are fed to the full, his blessing will doubtless be to us as an inexhaustible source of plenty, provided we ourselves do not hinder it from flowing to us by our unbelief.

29. *Thou shalt hide thy face, and they shall be afraid.* In these words, the Psalmist declares, that we stand or fall according to the will of God. We continue to live, so long as he sustains us by his power; but no sooner does he withdraw his life-giving spirit than we die. Even Plato knew this, who so often teaches that, properly speaking, there is but one God, and that all things subsist, or have their being only in him. Nor do I doubt, that it was the will of God, by means of that heathen writer, to awaken all men to the knowledge, that they derive their life from another source than from themselves. In the first place, the Psalmist asserts, that *if God hide his face they are afraid;* and, secondly, that *if he take away their spirit they die, and return to their dust;* by which words he points out, that when God vouchsafes to look upon us, that look gives us life, and that as long as his serene countenance shines, it inspires all the creatures with life. Our blindness then is doubly inexcusable, if we do not on our part cast our eyes upon that goodness which gives life to the whole world. The prophet describes step by step the destruction of living creatures, upon God's withdrawing from them his secret energy, that from the contrast he may the better commend that continued inspiration, by which all things are maintained in life and vigour. He could have

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gone farther, and have asserted, that all things, unless upheld in being by God, would return to nothing; but he was content with affirming in general and popular language, that whatever is not cherished by Him falls into corruption. He again declares, that the world is daily *renewed*, because *God sendeth forth his spirit.* In the propagation of living creatures, we doubtless see continually a new creation of the world. In now calling *that* God's spirit, which he before represented as the spirit of living creatures, there is no contradiction. God sendeth forth that spirit which remains with him whither he pleases; and as soon as he has sent it forth, all things are created. In this way, what was his own he makes to be ours. But this gives no countenance to the old dream of the Manichæans, which that filthy dog Servetus has made still worse in our own day. The Manichæans said that the soul of man is a particle of the Divine Spirit, and is propagated from it as the shoot of a tree; but this base man has had the audacity to assert, that oxen, asses, and dogs, are parts of the divine essence. The Manichees at least had this pretext for their error, that the soul was created after the image of God; but to maintain this with respect to swine and cattle, is in the highest degree monstrous and detestable. Nothing was farther from the prophet's intention, than to divide the *spirit of God* into parts, so that a portion of it should dwell essentially in every living creature. But he termed that the *spirit of God* which proceeds from him. By the way, he instructs us, that it is ours, because it is given us, that it may quicken us. The amount of what is stated is, that when we see the world daily decaying, and daily renewed, the life-giving power of God is reflected to us herein as in a mirror. All the deaths which take place among living creatures, are just so many examples of our nothingness, so to speak; and when others are produced and grow up in their room, we have in that presented to us a renewal of the world. Since then the world daily dies, and is daily renewed in its various parts, the manifest conclusion is, that it subsists only by a secret virtue derived from God.

31. *Glory be to Jehovah for ever: let Jehovah rejoice in his works.*

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32. *When he looketh upon the earth, it shall tremble : if he touch the mountains, they shall smoke.*[1]

33. *I will sing to Jehovah whilst I live : I will sing psalms to my God as long as I have my being.*[2]

34. *Let my speech* [or *words*[3]] *be acceptable to him :*[4] *I will rejoice in Jehovah.*

35. *Let sinners perish from the earth, and the wicked till they cease to be any more. O my soul ! bless thou Jehovah. Halleluiah.*

31. *Glory be to Jehovah for ever.* The inspired writer shows for what purpose he has celebrated in the preceding part of the psalm the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in his works, namely, to stir up men to praise him. It is no small honour that God for our sake has so magnificently adorned the world, in order that we may not only be spectators of this beauteous theatre, but also enjoy the multiplied abundance and variety of good things which are presented to us in it. Our gratitude in yielding to God the praise which is his due, is regarded by him as a singular recompense. What the Psalmist adds, *Let Jehovah rejoice in his works*, is not superfluous ; for he desires that the order which God has established from the beginning may be continued in the lawful use of his gifts. As we read in Gen. vi. 6, that "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth," so when he sees that the good things which he bestows are polluted by our corruptions, he ceases to take delight in bestowing them. And certainly the confusion and disorder which take

[1] "*They smoke.* Gejerus, Patrick, &c., refer this to Exod. xix. 18. But may it not have respect also to volcanic mountains in general ?"—*Dimock.*

[2] "*Through the whole of my existence,* בעודי, *for my perpetuality.*—See the word used in the same sense, Ps. cxxxix. 18."—*Horsley.*

[3] "Ou, meditation."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, meditation."

[4] In our English Bible it is, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." As the prefix עַל, *al*, signifies *to*, as well as *on*, it may be doubtful whether עָלָיו should be rendered *to him* or *on him*. If in the latter sense, our English version is correct, "My meditation of *or* on him shall be sweet ;" and with this the last clause of the verse would well accord, "I will be glad in the Lord," which is an effect of the sweetness felt in meditating upon him. But all the ancient versions give the former rendering, according to these words in Ps. xix. 14, "Let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight." Thus the Septuagint has ἡδυνθείη αὐτῷ, "Let it be sweet to him," and similar is the rendering in the other versions.

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place, when the elements cease to perform their office, testify that God, displeased and wearied out, is provoked to discontinue, and put a stop to the regular course of his beneficence; although anger and impatience have strictly speaking no place in his mind. What is here taught is, that he bears the character of the best of fathers, who takes pleasure in tenderly cherishing his children, and in bountifully nourishing them. In the following verse it is shown, that the stability of the world depends on this rejoicing of God in his works; for did he not give vigour to the earth by his gracious and fatherly regard, as soon as he looked upon it with a severe countenance, he would make it tremble, and would burn up the very mountains.

33. *I will sing to Jehovah whilst I live.* Here the Psalmist points out to others their duty by his own example, declaring, that throughout the whole course of his life he will proclaim the praises of God without ever growing weary of that exercise. The only boundary which he fixes to the celebration of God's praises is death; not that the saints, when they pass from this world into another state of existence, desist from this religious duty, but because the end for which we are created is, that the divine name may be celebrated by us on the earth. Conscious of his unworthiness to offer to God so precious a sacrifice, he humbly prays, (verse 34,) *that the praises which he will sing to God may be acceptable to him*, although they proceed from polluted lips. It is true, that there is nothing more acceptable to God, nor any thing of which he more approves, than the publication of his praises, even as there is no service which he more peculiarly requires us to perform. But as our uncleanness defiles that which in its own nature is most holy, the prophet with good reason betakes himself to the goodness of God, and on this ground alone pleads that He would accept of his song of praise. Accordingly, the Apostle, in Heb. xiii. 15, teaches that our sacrifices of thanksgiving are well pleasing to God, when they are offered to him through Christ. It being however the case, that whilst all men indiscriminately enjoy the benefits of God, there are yet very few who look to the author of them,

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the prophet subjoins the clause, *I will rejoice in the Lord;* intimating, that this is a rare virtue; for nothing is more difficult than to call home the mind from those wild and erratic joys, which disperse themselves through heaven and earth in which they evanish, that it may keep itself fixed on God alone.

35. *Let sinners perish from the earth.* This imprecation depends on the last clause of the 31st verse, *Let Jehovah rejoice in his works.* As the wicked infect the world with their pollutions, the consequence is, that God has less delight in his own workmanship, and is even almost displeased with it. It is impossible, but that this uncleanness, which, being extended and diffused through every part of the world, vitiates and corrupts such a noble product of his hands, must be offensive to him. Since then the wicked, by their perverse abuse of God's gifts, cause the world in a manner to degenerate and fall away from its first original, the prophet justly desires that they may be exterminated, until the race of them entirely fail. Let us then take care so to weigh the providence of God, as that being wholly devoted to obeying him, we may rightly and purely use the benefits which he sanctifies for our enjoying them. Farther, let us be grieved, that such precious treasures are wickedly squandered away, and let us regard it as monstrous and detestable, that men not only forget their Maker, but also, as it were, purposely turn to a perverse and an unworthy end, whatever good things he has bestowed upon them.

PSALM CV.

The Psalmist magnifies the singular grace of God displayed in selecting and freely adopting one people from amongst all nations of the world. To show that it was not in word only that he had made a covenant with Abraham and his offspring, God did not cease, after having delivered them from Egypt, to confer upon them innumerable benefits;

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and his design in this was, that those who had been delivered might on their part faithfully keep his covenant, and devote themselves unfeignedly to his service.[1]

1. *Praise ye Jehovah; invoke his name: announce his works among the peoples.*
2. *Sing ye to him: sing psalms to him: speak ye of all his wonders.*
3. *Rejoice ye in his holy name:*[2] *let the heart of those who seek Jehovah rejoice.*
4. *Seek ye Jehovah, and his strength: seek his face continually.*
5. *Remember the marvellous works which he hath performed; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.*

1. *Praise ye Jehovah, &c.* The object of these opening words simply is, that the offspring of Abraham should place all their blessedness in the free adoption of God. It was indeed a blessing not to be despised that they had been created men, that they had been cherished in the world by God's fatherly care, and that they had received sustenance at his hand; but it was a far more distinguished privilege to have been chosen to be his peculiar people. While the whole human race are condemned in Adam, the condition of the Israelites was so different from all other nations, as to give them ground to boast, that they were consecrated to God. This is the reason why the prophet heaps together so many words in commendation of this grace. He does not treat of

[1] This psalm has no title in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but in the Vulgate, Septuagint, Æthiopic, and Arabic versions, the *halleluiah* which concludes the preceding psalm is prefixed as the inscription. The first fifteen verses correspond with the first part of a song of thanksgiving, which David composed to be sung after the ark had been brought from Obed-edom to Zion.—See 1 Chron. xv. 8-22. Hence some conclude, that David was its inspired penman, and that he probably enlarged it at some subsequent period of his history, that it might supply a more complete commemoration of God's signal and extraordinary goodness towards the Israelites from the days of Abraham to their final settlement in the land of Canaan; while others conclude, that it was enlarged by some Hebrew bard, at the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. This psalm bears a strong resemblance to the 78th, as well in the subject as in the style, except perhaps that the diction here is rather of a more simple cast.

[2] In the French version it is, "Praise ye his holy name." Hammond, agreeably to this, would read, "Praise ye the name of his holiness;" thinking that ב, *beth*, *in*, is a pleonasm.

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the government of the whole world as he did in the preceding psalm, but he celebrates the fatherly favour which God had manifested towards the children of Israel. He indeed names in general *his works*, and *his wonders*, but he limits both to that spiritual covenant by which God made choice of a church, that might lead on earth a heavenly life. He does not intend to include as among these wonders, that the sun, moon, and stars, daily rise to give light to the world, that the earth produces its fruit in its seasons, that every living creature is supplied with abundance of all good things for its food, and that the human family are liberally provided with so many conveniences; but he celebrates the sovereign grace of God, by which he chose for himself from amongst the lost race of Adam a small portion to whom he might show himself to be a father. Accordingly, he enjoins them *to rejoice in the name of God*, and *to call upon him;* a privilege by which the Church alone is distinguished. Whence it follows, that this language is addressed to none but true believers, whom God would have to glory in his name, since he has taken them under his special protection.

4. *Seek ye Jehovah, and his strength.*[1] Although he had in the preceding verse characterised the faithful by the honourable designation, *those who seek God*, yet he again exhorts them to earnestness in seeking him, which is not an unnecessary exhortation. Seeking God, it is true, is the mark by which all genuine saints are particularly distinguished from the men of the world; but they come far short of seeking him with due ardour; and, accordingly, they have always need of incitements, to urge them on to this exercise, although they run of their own accord. Those whom the prophet here stirs up to seek God are not fickle persons, nor

[1] "For עֻזּוֹ, *his strength*, the LXX. seem to have read עֻזָּיו, *be strengthened*, and accordingly render it κραταιωθῆτε, the Latin 'confirmamini,' 'be confirmed,' and so the Syriac, 'be strengthened.' This the sense would well bear, 'Seek the Lord, and be confirmed;' let all your strength be sought from him. So the Jewish Arab, 'Seek the Lord, and seek that he would strengthen you, *or* strength from him, *or* you shall certainly be strengthened,' if by prayer you diligently *seek* him."—*Hammond.* Horsley also reads, "Seek the Lord, and be strong."

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such as are altogether indolent, and who cleave to the impurities of earth, but those who with a prompt and ready mind already aim at doing this; and he thus stimulates them, because he perceives that they are obstructed by many impediments from advancing in their course with sufficient rapidity. However willing then we may be, we have notwithstanding need of such incitement to correct our slowness. *The strength* and *face of God*, doubtless refer to that kind of manifestation by which God, accommodating himself to the rudeness of the times, drew at that time true believers to himself. The ark of the covenant is in many other places called both *the strength* and *the face of God*, because by that symbol the people were reminded, that he was near them, and also really experienced his power.[1] The more familiarly then God showed himself to them, with the more promptitude and alacrity would the prophet have them to apply their hearts in seeking him; and the aid by which God relieves our weakness should prove an additional stimulus to our zeal. Modesty also is recommended to us, that, mindful of our slowness in seeking God, we may keep the way which he has prescribed to us, and may not despise the rudiments through which he by little and little conducts us to himself. It is added *continually*, that no person may grow weary in this exercise, or, inflated with a foolish opinion of having reached perfection, may neglect the external aids of piety, as is done by many, who, after having advanced a few degrees in the knowledge of God, exempt themselves from the common rank of others, as if they were elevated above the angels. Again, the injunction is given *to remember the marvellous works which God had performed*, in the deliverance of his people from Egypt, when he displayed his power in new and unusual ways. By *the judgments of his mouth*, some understand the law. But as I read all the three expressions, *his marvellous works*, *his wonders*, and *the judg-*

[1] With this agrees the interpretation of Lowth: "The *holy ark*, and the *shechinah* which remained upon it, the symbol of the divine presence, is called the *face of God*; and to seek the face of God, is to appear before the ark, to worship at the sanctuary of God, which was required of the Israelites thrice a year.—See 2 Sam. xxi. 1; 2 Chron. vii. 14; Ps. xxvii. 8; Exod. xxiii. 17."—*Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, vol. ii. p. 241.

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ments of his mouth, as referring to one series of events, I prefer explaining it rather of the miracles by which God subdued the pride of Pharaoh. Still, however, there is some doubt as to the reason of this manner of speaking. Some are of opinion, that these miracles are called the judgments of God's mouth, because he had foretold them by Moses, which is highly probable. At the same time, the expression might be taken more simply, as denoting that the power of God was manifested in an extraordinary manner in these miracles; from which it would be easy to gather, that they were performed by him. I do not mean to exclude the ministry of Moses, whom God had raised up to be a prophet to the Egyptians, that in denouncing what was to come to pass, he might show that nothing happened by chance. Yet I think there is an allusion to the manifest character of the miracles, as if it had been said, Although God had not uttered a word, the facts themselves evidently showed, that he was the deliverer of his people.

6. *Ye seed of Abraham his servant, the sons of Jacob his chosen.*
7. *He is Jehovah our God: his judgments are through all the earth.*
8. *He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations:*
9. *Which he made with Abraham,*[1] *and his oath which he swore to Isaac;*[2]
10. *And established it to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:*[3]
11. *Saying, I will give thee the land of Canaan, the cord* [or *measuring line*[4]] *of your inheritance.*

[1] See Gen. xv. 17, 18; xvii. 2; xxii. 16; xxvi. 3; xxxv. 11.
[2] See Gen. xxvi. 3.
[3] To Jacob also he renewed at Beersheba all the gracious assurances of the covenant which he had made with Abraham, and ratified to Isaac, (Gen. xxviii. 10-15;) and he again renewed them at Padan-aram, (Gen. xxxv. 9-15; xiii. 1-5,) when he changed his name from Jacob to Israel.
[4] In our English version it is *lot*. But the original word signifies a *cord* or *line*. There is here an allusion to the several lots or portions into which the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes;

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6. *Ye seed of Abraham his servant.* The Psalmist addresses himself by name to his own countrymen, whom, as has been stated, God had bound to himself by a special adoption. It was a bond of union still more sacred, that by the mere good pleasure of God they were preferred to all other nations. By calling them *the seed of Abraham, and the sons of Jacob*, he reminds them that they had not attained so great dignity by their own power, but because they were descended from the holy fathers. He, however, affirms at the same time, that the holiness of their fathers flowed exclusively from God's election, and not from their own nature. He expressly states both these truths, first, that before they were born children of Abraham, they were already heirs of the covenant, because they derived their origin from the holy fathers; and, secondly, that the fathers themselves had not acquired this prerogative by their own merit or worth, but had been freely chosen; for this is the reason why Jacob is called *God's chosen*. Although Abraham is also here called *God's servant*, (Gen. xxvi. 24,) because he purely and sincerely worshipped him, yet in the second clause it is testified that the commencement of this distinction was not to be traced to men, but to God alone, who conferred upon the Israelites the honour of choosing them to be his peculiar possession.

From this covenant the Psalmist infers that although the government of God extends through the whole world, and although he executes his judgment in all places, he was nevertheless especially the God of that one people, (verse 7,) according to the statement in the song of Moses, (Deut. xxxii. 8, 9,) "When the Most High divided to the nations their

which were measured by lines. See vol. i. p. 225, n. 4. It being thought by some learned men that the descendants of Heber possessed the land of Canaan before the Canaanites, and that the latter unjustly dispossessed them, (see vol. iii. p. 264, n. 3;) Dimock supposes that the phrase, "the lot of your inheritance," refers to this prior and rightful possession. But the appellation given them in verse 12th, as *strangers in it*, seems to militate against such an opinion. Nor is it necessary for vindicating God to have recourse to such a supposition. As he is the supreme proprietor of all the earth, he has a right to give it to whomsoever he pleases; and the wickedness of the Canaanites sufficiently justified their expulsion.

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inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel: For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." The prophet again intended to show that the reason why the children of Israel excelled others was not because they were better than others, but because such was the good pleasure of God. If the divine judgments are extended through all the regions of the globe, the condition of all nations is in this respect equal. Whence it follows that the difference referred to proceeded from the love of God,—that the source of the superiority of the Israelites to other nations was his free favour. Although, then, He is the rightful proprietor of the whole earth, it is declared that he chose one people over whom he might reign. This is a doctrine which applies to us also at the present day. If we duly ponder our calling, we will undoubtedly find that God has not been induced from anything out of himself to prefer us to others, but that he was pleased to do so purely from his own free grace.

8. *He hath remembered his covenant for ever.* The Psalmist now celebrates the effect and actual fulfilment of the covenant, and proves from the deliverance wrought for the Israelites what he had stated before, namely, That God, while he reigned alike over all nations, extended his peculiar favour to the offspring of Abraham alone. How comes it to pass that God, in delivering his people, displayed the might of his arm by so many miracles, if it was not that he might faithfully perform the promise which he had made to his servants in time past? It is evident, then, that the ancient covenant was the cause of the deliverance granted to the chosen tribes; for in order that God might faithfully keep his promises, it behoved him first to be merciful. As a long series of years had elapsed between the promise and the performance, the prophet uses the word *remember*, intimating that the Divine promises do not become obsolete by length of time, but that even when the world imagines that they are extinguished and wholly forgotten, God retains as distinct a remembrance of them as ever, that he may accomplish them in due season.

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This is more strongly confirmed in the next clause, where the correspondence between the form or tenor of the covenant and the accomplishment is celebrated. It is not for a day, he would say, or for a few days, that God has made a covenant with Abraham, nor has he limited the continuance of his covenant to the life of man, but he has promised to be the God of his seed even to a thousand generations. Although, therefore, the fulfilment was for a long time suspended, God nevertheless showed by the effect that his promise did not fail by length of time.

As Abraham was the first who was called when he was mingled with idolaters, the prophet begins with him. He, however, afterwards declares that the covenant was also confirmed in the hand of his son and his son's son. God then deposited his covenant with Abraham, and by solemn oath engaged to be the God of his seed. But to give greater assurance of the truth of his promise, he was graciously pleased to renew it to Isaac and Jacob. The effect of such an extension of it is, that his faithfulness takes deeper hold on the hearts of men; and, besides, his grace, when it is thus testified on frequent recurring occasions, becomes better known and more illustrious among men. Accordingly, it is here declared by gradation how stedfast and immoveable this covenant is; for what is affirmed concerning each of the patriarchs belongs equally to them all. It is said that God *swore to Isaac*. But had he not sworn to Abraham before? Undoubtedly he had. It is also said *that it was established to Jacob for a law, and for an everlasting covenant*. Does this mean that the covenant was previously only temporal and transitory, and that then it had changed its nature? Such an idea is altogether at variance with the meaning of the sacred writer. By these different forms of expression he asserts that the covenant was fully and perfectly confirmed, so that, if perhaps the calling was obscure in one man, it might be more evident, by God's having transmitted the testimony of it to posterity; for by this means the truth of it was the better manifested. Here again we must remember that God with great kindness considers our weakness when, both by his oath, and by frequently repeating his word, he ratifies what he has once promised

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to us. Our ingratitude then appears the fouler in disbelieving him when he not only speaks but also swears.

11. *Saying, I will give thee the land of Canaan.* As this was only a small portion of the blessings offered to the fathers, the prophet seems at first view too much to limit the covenant of God, which extended even to the hope of an eternal inheritance. But he considered it enough to show, by the figure synecdoche, that a part of what God had promised to the fathers had received its complete accomplishment. His drift is to intimate that they did not possess the land of Canaan by any other right than because it was the legitimate inheritance of Abraham according to the covenant which God had made with him. If man exhibit the promised earnest of a contract, he does not violate the contract. When, therefore, the prophet proves by a visible symbol that God did not make a covenant with his servants in vain, and that he did not disappoint their hope, he does not take away or abolish the other blessings included in it. Nay, rather, when the Israelites heard that they possessed the land of Canaan by right of inheritance, because they were the chosen people of God, it became them to look beyond this, and to take a comprehensive view of all the privileges by which He had vouchsafed to distinguish them. Hence it is to be noted, that when He in part fulfils his promises towards us, we are base and ungrateful if this experience does not conduce to the confirmation of our faith. Whenever he shows himself to be a father towards us, he undoubtedly really seals on our hearts the power and efficacy of his word. But if the land of Canaan ought to have led the children of Israel in their contemplations to heaven, since they knew that they had been brought into it on account of the covenant which God had made with them, the consideration that He has given to us his Christ, "in whom all the promises are yea and amen," (2 Cor. i. 20,) ought to have much greater weight with us. When it is said, *I will give thee the measuring line of* YOUR *inheritance,* the change of the number points out that God made a covenant with all the people in general, though he spake the words only to a few individuals; even as we have

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seen a little before that it was a decree or an everlasting law. The holy patriarchs were the first and principal persons into whose hands the promise was committed; but they did not embrace the grace which was offered to them as what belonged only to themselves, but as what their posterity in common with them were to become sharers of.

12. *When they were but very few in number; and strangers in it.*
13. *And walked about from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people.*
14. *He did not suffer men to hurt them; and rebuked kings for their sake;*
15. *Saying, Touch not my anointed ones, and do my prophets no wrong.*[1]

12. *When they were but very few in number.* The prophet here recounts the benefits which God had conferred upon the holy fathers from the commencement, to manifest that even long before the deliverance from Egypt, the covenant was not ineffectual. The great object aimed at in this recital, is to show that ever since God took Abraham under his protection, he cherished him in a wonderful manner, and also that his fatherly love and care were displayed in maintaining and defending the other two patriarchs. When it is said, that *they were but very few in number*, the power of God by this circumstance is not only magnified, but the cause why he was so beneficent towards them is also pointed out. We must then, in the first place, attend to this, that the

[1] Dr Morison explains the 13th, 14th, and 15th verses thus:— "When they went from one part of Canaan to another, which they found possessed by seven great nations, (Gen. vii. 1;) when they were driven from one kingdom to another people,—sometimes in Egypt, (Gen. xii. 10,) sometimes in Gerar, (Gen. xx. 1; xxvi.,) and sometimes in the country of the East, from whence they came, (Gen. xxix. 1,) he suffered no one to injure them; on the contrary, he raised up friends for them, (Gen. xxxi. 24, 42,) rebuked the kings of Egypt (Gen. xii. 16, 17) and Gerar (Gen. xx. 3) for their sakes, and counselled them in the most solemn terms not to touch or injure the persons of his anointed servants, (Gen. xxvi. 11, 29,) by whom, that is by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Most High communicated his will to his Church, pouring his Spirit upon them, and making them kings and priests in the distinguished families to which they belonged."

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prophet, lest the Jews should arrogate anything to themselves, expressly declares, that their fathers had experienced the divine favour, even when they were feeble and despised, wandering from place to place, in every respect poor and miserable according to the flesh. Thus also Moses reproaches them, Deut. vii. 7, 8, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you." In short, in the choosing of this people, no regard was had either to number, or to any excellence whatever. There was only the house of Abraham, and yet it was barren. Isaac was compelled to banish to a distance from him one of his two sons, and he saw the other cut off from his family. The house of Jacob was indeed more fruitful, but it was nevertheless of a low condition. Besides, they were not only ignoble and despised when sojourning in a strange land, but famine, and the want of other things also, compelled them frequently to go from one place to another. All these things being taken into view, the consideration of human worth falls to the ground, and it is clearly seen, that all the blessings which God had bestowed upon them flowed from no other fountain than his own free love. And the cause of this love is not to be sought for out of himself. If the Holy Spirit is so careful in magnifying the grace of God in these earthly blessings, how much more must he observe this rule, when the subject of which he speaks is the heavenly inheritance! When it is said, that *they walked about from nation to nation*, this intimates the more plainly how wonderfully the divine protection was displayed in preserving them. Had they found any quiet nest in which to repose, such comfort would have been a notable sign of the divine goodness; but when they were as exiles in divers countries, and were driven from one place to another with bitter scorn, as chaff is driven about by the wind, the guardianship which God exercised over them shone forth much more conspicuously. Since their life everywhere hung only by a thread, and the changing of their place of sojourn exposed them from time to time to fresh injuries, it is evident that it was the divine power alone which preserved them in safety.

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14. *He did not suffer men to hurt them.* Abraham and his children had not merely two or three enemies: they were harassed by whole nations. As then many rose up one after another in troops against them, the Psalmist says indefinitely, that men were withheld from hurting them; for אדם, *adam*, is the word here used, which is the one most generally employed to signify *man*. He next amplifies the love of God towards his servants, in setting himself in opposition to kings for their sake. When God did not spare even the kings of Egypt and Gerar, it is evident how precious the welfare of Abraham and his offspring was in his sight. We have said a little before that the holy fathers were of no estimation in the eyes of the world. God therefore displayed his goodness so much the more signally in preferring them to kings. Now we here see, that the Jews were humbled in the person of their fathers, that they might not imagine that they found favour in the sight of God by any merit of their own.

15. *Saying, Touch not my anointed ones.* The Psalmist proceeds farther, affirming, that when God made war against kings for the sake of his servants, they were defended by him, not only as he is accustomed to succour the miserable and the unjustly oppressed, but because he had taken them under his special guardianship. God protects his people, not only upon a general ground, but because he has declared on account of his free adoption, that he will maintain them. This is the reason why these holy patriarchs are here honoured with two designations, *his prophets* and *his anointed ones*. In speaking of other men, God would have said, Touch not these men who have done wrong to nobody, hurt not these poor wretched creatures who have deserved no such treatment at your hands. But in the person of Abraham and his children, he shows that there was another reason for his defending them. He calls them *anointed ones*, because he had set them apart to be his peculiar people. In the same sense, he designates them *prophets*, (a title with which Abraham is also honoured, Gen. xx. 7,) not only because God had manifested himself more intimately to them, but also because they faithfully spread around them divine truth, that the memory of it might

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survive them, and flourish after their death. Anointing, it is true, was not as yet in use, as it was afterwards under the law; but the prophet teaches, that what God at a subsequent period exhibited in the ceremonies of the law was really and in very deed in Abraham, even as God engraves the mark of sanctification on all his chosen ones. If God's inward anointing was of such powerful efficacy, even at the time when he had not yet appointed, or delivered the figures of the law, with how much greater care will he defend his servants now, after having exhibited to us the plenitude of anointing in his only begotten Son!

16. *And he called a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.*
17. *He sent a man before them; Joseph was sold for a slave.*
18. *They afflicted his feet in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul.*
19. *Until the time that his word came: the word of Jehovah tried him.*

16. *And he called a famine upon the land.* Here the inspired writer recounts a most illustrious proof of divine providence towards the chosen people, at the time when the covenant might seem to be void and disannulled. The inheritance of the land of Canaan (as has been stated above) was added, as an earnest or pledge for confirmation. The descent of Jacob into Egypt, which deprived his house of the sight of the land, could not make the covenant to perish. In this the constancy of God shone forth the brighter; yea, by this trial he manifested more plainly how provident a father he was in preserving the seed of Abraham. But it is better to consider each particular in the verse. In the first place, it is taught, that the famine which drove Jacob into Egypt did not happen by chance. Although only one particular famine is here treated of, it is to be held as a general principle, that there is no other cause of any scarcity of sustenance except this, that God, in withdrawing his hand, takes away the means of support. The curse of God is expressed more emphatically, when it is said, that *the famine was called;* as if it

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were ready at his command, as a minister of his wrath. By this we are instructed, that famine, pestilence, and other scourges of God, do not visit men by chance, but are directed by his hand whither it pleases him, and are obedient to his will.[1] The manner in which the famine was called is next stated, namely, when he *brake the staff of bread.* The metaphor of *staff* is very appropriate; for God has put into bread the power and property of strengthening man, by a secret virtue which fits it to sustain us. So long as it pleases him to nourish us by such means, a staff as it were lies hidden within it. This staff is broken in two ways; either, first, when he takes away the supply of grain necessary for our nourishment, the sense in which it seems to be used in Ezek. chap. iv. 16, "Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment;" or, secondly, when he breathes in anger upon the bread itself, so that those who would satisfy themselves by devouring it, instead of having their hunger thereby removed, remain famished still. And certainly to the barrenness of the earth this second is commonly added, namely, that he takes away the sustaining powr which is in bread; for, as it is declared in Deut. viii. 3, bread does not give life of itself, but borrows its secret virtue from the mouth of God.

17. *He sent a man before them.* This whole passage graphically teaches us, that whatever befell that people was by the hand and counsel of God. The simple recital would have been to say, that the famine came upon the land, after Joseph had been sold by his brethren, and carried into Egypt. But the prophet speaks emphatically, declaring that Joseph by the divine counsel had been sent before into Egypt, to support his father's house, that afterwards the famine was called, and that then, by God's providence, a remedy was presented beyond all hope. This, indeed, is generally true in human

[1] "Famine is here finely represented as a servant, ready to come and go at the 'call' and command of God; for calamities, whether public or private, are the messengers of divine justice."—*Horne.*

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affairs; but there is here commemorated a special care which God took in governing and nourishing his Church. Moreover, the prophet mentions that as second in place which was first in the order of time. Accordingly, in regard to the word *send*, the pluperfect tense would better express the sense, *He had sent;* implying that before God afflicted the land of Canaan with famine, he had prepared a remedy for his servant Jacob, and for his household, in having sent Joseph before as a steward to provide them with food. Here two contraries as it were are stated, to render the divine superintendence in the whole the more conspicuous. How was Joseph sent of God? It was in this way:—When he was doomed to death, it happened that his brethren preferred selling him to leaving him in his grave. This selling, if considered merely by itself, like a cloud interposed, obscured and concealed the divine providence. When counsel was taken to put Joseph to death, who would have expected that he was to be the sustainer of his father's house? Afterwards a kind of death was devised for him less cruel; but then he was cast into a well or pit, and in that situation how could he succour others? The last hope was, that at length being sold, he came forth from the pit. But again, he was well nigh rotting all his life long in prison.

Who could think that processes so intricate and circuitous were controlled by divine providence? The prophet therefore meets this difficulty by saying, that in respect of men, he was indeed *sold;* but that he had nevertheless been previously sent by the divine purpose. The passage is worthy of notice, admirably vindicating, as it does, the providence of God against the perverse stupidity of our corrupt nature. Resting on the second causes which meet the eye, or ascribing to the direction of man whatever is done in this world, or thinking that all things happen by chance, very few trace them to the appointment of God. And yet the selling of Joseph is not here interposed as a veil to hide divine providence; but is rather set forth as a signal instance of it to teach us that whatever men may undertake, the issues are in the hand of God; or rather, that by a secret influence, he bends the hearts of men in whatever direction he pleases,

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that by their instrumentality, whether they will or no, he may bring to pass what he has determined should be done. Agreeably to this Joseph said to his brethren, "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life," (Gen. xlv. 5.) Farther, God so governs human affairs by his secret controlling influence, and overrules men's wicked devices to a right end, as that his judgments are notwithstanding uncontaminated by the depravity of men. The brethren of Joseph wickedly conspire his death; they also wrongfully sell him: the fault is in themselves. Contemplate now how God directs and controls all. By the hand of these brethren he provides for the good both of themselves and of their father Jacob, yea for that of the whole Church. This holy purpose contracts no defilement or spot from the malice of those who aimed at an entirely opposite end; even as Joseph testified afterwards, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive," (Gen. l. 20.)

18. *They afflicted his feet in the fetters.* It is not without cause that the Psalmist prosecutes the winding course of Jacob's early history, which might so confuse the minds of men as to prevent them from directing their attention to the counsel of God. What seemed less likely than to believe that God, by so directly opposite and circuitous a path, meant to accomplish what he had purposed? But his providence, by surmounting so many obstacles, is brought out more conspicuously, than if he had despatched the whole matter by a short and easy road. Had Joseph, as soon as he arrived in Egypt, been presented to the king, and made its governor, the way to what followed would have been easy. But when he was carried away to prison, and lay there separated from the society of men, living as one half-dead; and when his becoming known to the king was a long time subsequent to this, and beyond all expectation, such a sudden change renders the miracle much more evident. This circuitous course then, which the prophet recounts, serves not a little to illustrate the subject in hand. Joseph was many times dead be-

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fore he was sold. Hence it follows, that God as often showed his care of his Church by delivering him who might be termed her father. When after, having been brought into Egypt, Joseph was conveyed from hand to hand till he descended into another grave, is it not the more clearly manifest from this that God, while he seems to be asleep in heaven, is all the while keeping the strictest watch over his servants, and that he is carrying forward his purpose more effectually by these various windings, than if he had gone straight forward, yea, than if he had run with rapid pace? For this reason the prophet affirms that *his feet were afflicted in the fetters;* a fact which, although not stated in the narrative of Moses, he speaks of as well known. And no doubt, many things were delivered by tradition to the Jews of which no mention is made in the Scriptures.[1] It is also probable enough, that, instead of being put at first under mild restraint, as was afterwards the case, he was rigorously confined. Whether we read, *his soul entered into the iron*, or *the iron entered into his soul*,[2] the meaning, which, in either case, is exactly the same, amounts to this, that the holy man was so galled with fetters, that it seemed as if his life had been given over to the sword. Whence it follows, that the safety of his life was as hopeless as the restoration of life to a dead body.

19. *Until the time that his word came.* Here the prophet teaches, that although, according to the judgment of the flesh, God seems to be too tardy in his steps, yet he holds

[1] The memory of this circumstance might, therefore, have been preserved by tradition; or it may be simply a conclusion drawn from Joseph's being incarcerated, and from the crime of which he was accused. When it is considered that prisoners were ordinarily secured by chains, and when the magnitude of the crime charged upon him, that of making an attempt upon the chastity of his mistress, is farther taken into account, it is a very probable inference, that when cast into prison, he was put in chains.

[2] The first of these readings is the most probable. The Hebrew is נפשׁו בא ברזל. "The verb being here in the feminine gender shows that the subject is נפשׁו, and that ברזל is accusative. In this manner the phrase is rendered by the LXX. *σίδηρον διῆλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ*, 'his soul passed through iron;' and so the Syriac, 'his soul went into iron;' but the Chaldee, disregarding the gender, has taken it the other way, 'the chain of iron went into his soul.'"—*(Phillips' Psalms in Hebrew, with a Critical, Exegetical, and Philological Commentary.)*

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supreme rule over all things, that he may at length accomplish in due time what he has determined. As to the term *word*, it is here doubtless to be taken, not for doctrine or instruction, but for a heavenly decree. The relative *his* admits of being understood as well of God himself as of Joseph; but its application to the latter appears to me to be preferable, implying that Joseph remained in prison until the issue of his affliction was manifested, which was hidden in the divine purpose. It is always to be kept in mind, that the prophet calls back the minds of men from that impious imagination, which would represent fortune as exercising a blind and capricious control over human affairs. Since nothing could be more involved in uncertainty than the welfare of the Church, whilst Joseph was accounted as a condemned person, the prophet here elevates our minds, and bids us look at the hidden word, that is, the decree, the proper opportunity and time for the manifestation of which had not yet arrived. After the same manner I explain what follows, *the word of God tried him*. To expound it of Joseph's prophesying,[1] as many

[1] It is so understood by Dr Kennicott. He refers the first clause of the verse to the completion of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of the chief butler and baker; an opinion which cannot be admitted, for Joseph was not delivered at that time, but *two years after* it, Gen. xli. 1. He refers the second clause to the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, called the Word *or* Oracle of Jehovah, because sent by him to Pharaoh. In this sense Hammond also interprets it. "*The word of the Lord*," says he, "is God's showing him the meaning of those dreams, (Gen. xli. 39,) God's telling him, or revealing to him, the interpretation of them." Some who take this view explain the verb *tried*, not as referring to the trial of Joseph's patience, but as referring to the proof of his innocence. "צָרַף," says Street, "in its primary sense, signifies *to refine metals*, or *to examine their purity by fire:* by metaphor it is applied to the human heart, and signifies *to purify, to prove, to examine;* but as metal, already free from dross, would not be refined, but only *show its purity* on being assayed, so here the word seems to signify *showed him to be innocent*. Joseph, protesting his innocence to Pharaoh's butler, says, (Gen. xl. 10,) 'Here also have I done nothing that they should put me in the dungeon;' and Pharaoh assigns it as his reason for taking him from prison, and setting him over the land of Egypt, (Gen. xli. 38,) 'Can ye find as this is a man in whom the Spirit of God is?' His interpreting, by the inspiration of God, their dreams, exempted him at once from being any longer looked on as a criminal, and raised him to the highest honours." "This word," says Phillips, "proved Joseph, or purified him, as the verb literally means, for it made him appear pure or innocent in the eyes of the people, who were thus assured that God was with him, and that he must therefore be a pious person, and not guilty of the crime for which he was thrown into a dungeon."

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do, seems too refined. Until the happy issue appeared, which God kept long hidden and in suspense, Joseph's patience was severely tried. What worldly men, who acknowledge not God to be the Governor of human affairs, call *fate*, the prophet distinguishes by a more appropriate name, terming it *word*, and the word of each man. Nor do I see any impropriety in using the French word *destinée*. When the Stoics dispute, or rather babble, about destiny, they not only involve themselves and the thing also of which they treat in intricate mazes, but, at the same time, involve in perplexity an indubitable truth; for in imagining a concatenation of causes, they divest God of the government of the world. It is an impious invention so to link together causes, interwoven with each other, as that God himself should be tied to them. Our faith then ought to mount up to his secret counsel, by which, uncontrolled, he directs all things to their end. This passage also teaches us that God will continue the afflictions of the godly only until they are thereby thoroughly proved.

20. *The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and set him free.*
21. *He made him lord over his house; and ruler over all his substance:*
22. *To bind his princes*[1] *at his pleasure; and to teach his elders wisdom.*
23. *And Israel came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.*[2]
24. *And he greatly increased his people, and multiplied*[3] *them above their oppressors.*

[1] "The meaning of *to bind his princes* is to exercise control over the greatest men in the kingdom, which power was conferred on Joseph by Pharaoh: see Gen. xli. 40; also verses 43, 44. The capability of binding is to be regarded as an evidence of authority; a power of compelling obedience; or, in default thereof, of inflicting punishment."—*Phillips.*

[2] "As the two members of the verse express substantially the same thing, we infer the land of Ham to be the same as Egypt. Ham, the son of Noah, was father to Mizraim, who is supposed to have been the founder of the Egyptians, and hence the two names of the country. Jerome, in his note on Gen. x. 6, observes that Egypt was called in his day, in the Egyptian language, by the name of Ham."—*Ibid.*

[3] "Ou, fortifia."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, strengthened."

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20. *The king sent and loosed him.* The Psalmist celebrates in high terms the deliverance of Joseph; for God's singular power was conspicuously displayed in a matter so incredible. What is of more rare occurrence than for a most powerful monarch to bring a stranger out of prison to constitute him ruler over his whole kingdom, and to raise him to a rank of honour, second only to himself? The phrase in verse 22d, *to bind his princes*, is commonly explained as implying that Joseph was invested with the chief sovereignty in the administration of the government, so that he could cast into prison, at his pleasure, even the nobles of the realm. Others, conceiving this interpretation to be somewhat harsh, derive the verb לאסור, *lesor*, which Moses employs, not from אסר, *asar*, which signifies *to bind*, but from יסר, *yasar*, which signifies *to instruct*, by changing the letter י, *yod*, into א, *aleph*.[1] But I am surprised that neither of them have perceived the metaphor contained in this word, which is, that Joseph held the lords of Egypt bound to him at his pleasure, or subject to his power. What is here spoken of is not fetters, but the bond or obligation of obedience, both the princes and all others being dependent on his will. The expression, which is added a little after, *to teach his elders wisdom*, evinces that Joseph did not bear sway like a tyrant, difficult and rare a thing as it is for men, when invested with sovereign power, not to give loose reins to their own humour: but that he was a rule and a pattern, even to the chief of them, in the high degree of discretion which he exemplified in the administering the affairs of state.

23. *And Israel came into Egypt.* The prophet does not rehearse the whole history, nor was this necessary. He only presents to our view how divine providence was concerned in it, which very few consider in reading the narrative of Moses. He accordingly declares, that after Joseph had been sent before into Egypt, to be the means of supporting his father and the whole family, Jacob then came into Egypt, that is, he did so when all things were admirably arranged, that he might find

[1] "For לאסר, the LXX., Vulgate, and Jerome, certainly had ליסר, 'to tutor;' or they took אסר in the sense of יסר, as they took it in Hosea, chap. x. 10."—*Horsley.*

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abundance of bread among a people, the proudest of the whole world,[1] when all others were perishing for want of food. From this it appears, that what is accounted to be slowness in God, tends to no other end than to accomplish his work on the best possible occasion.

24. *And he greatly increased his people.* The singular favour of God towards his Church is now commended by the additional circumstance, that within a short space of time, the chosen people increased beyond the common proportion. In this matter the wonderful blessing of God was strikingly displayed. So much the more offensive then is the barking of some dogs, who insolently scoff at the account given by Moses of the multiplying of the people, because it goes far beyond what takes place in the ordinary course of things. Had the people increased only at the common rate, these persons would have immediately objected, that therein no work of God was to be seen. Thus the object which they pursue by their cavillings is nothing else than to make it to be believed, that the blessing of God had no connection with the case. But we, who are persuaded that it is unwarrantable for us to measure God's power according to our own understandings, or according to what happens by the common law of nature, reverently admire this extraordinary work of his hand. The subsequent clause is a little obscure, especially if we read, *The people were strengthened;*[2] for the prophet does not seem to refer to that period when the Israelites lived at ease and in prosperity, but to the time when they were contemptuously and barbarously dealt with as slaves. We may, however, understand the language as spoken by anticipation,—as pointing to what was to happen. In the following verse, it is affirmed, that the Egyptians having changed their mind, began to treat the people with

[1] "En un peuple le plus superbe de tout le monde."—*Fr.*

[2] "The root עצם," says Phillips, "signifies *to be strong*, not only with regard to physical force, but also with respect to number: Ps. xxxviii. 20; xl. 6; lxix. 5, &c.; in German, a great number is called *eine starke Anzahl, a strong number.* Number seems to be referred to in this passage."

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cruelty. Although then the Egyptians did not as yet openly exercise their cruelty against the people, when they were increasing both in number and strength, yet the prophet calls them persecutors. It is certain, that the Israelites, even when they were oppressed as slaves, were a terror to their enemies; and Moses plainly affirms, (Exod. i. 12,) that when they were under tyranny and wrongful oppression, it was still abundantly manifest, that the blessing of God rested upon them.

25. *He turned their heart, so that they hated his people, and dealt craftily with his servants.*
26. *He sent Moses his servant; Aaron whom he had chosen.*
27. *They set among them the words of his signs and his miracles in the land of Ham.*
28. *He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they were not rebellious against his words.*
29. *He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish.*
30. *Their land brought forth frogs, yea, even within the chambers of their kings.*

25. *He turned their heart, so that they hated his people.* The Egyptians, though at first kind and courteous hosts to the Israelites, became afterwards cruel enemies; and this also the prophet ascribes to the counsel of God. They were undoubtedly driven to this by a perverse and malignant spirit, by pride and covetousness; but still such a thing did not happen without the providence of God, who in an incomprehensible manner so accomplishes his work in the reprobate, as that he brings forth light even out of darkness. The form of expression seems to some a little too harsh, and therefore they translate the verb passively, *their* (*i.e.*, the Egyptians') *hearts were turned.* But this is poor, and does not suit the context; for we see that it is the express object of the inspired writer to put the whole government of the Church under God, so that nothing may happen but according to his will. If the delicate ears of some are offended at such doctrine, let it be observed, that the Holy Spirit unequivocally affirms in other places as well as here, that the minds of men are driven hither and thither by a secret impulse,

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(Prov. xxi. 1,) so that they can neither will nor do any thing except as God pleases. What madness is it to embrace nothing but what commends itself to human reason? What authority will God's word have, if it is not admitted any farther than we are inclined to receive it? Those then who reject this doctrine, because it is not very grateful to the human understanding, are inflated with a perverse arrogance. Others malignantly misrepresent it, not through ignorance or by mistake, but only that they may excite commotion in the Church, or to bring us into odium among the ignorant. Some over-timid persons could wish, for the sake of peace, that this doctrine were buried. They are surely ill qualified for composing differences. This was the very cause why in former times the doctors of the Church, in their writings, swerved from the pure and genuine truths of the gospel, and turned aside to a heathen philosophy. Whence originated the doctrine of free-will, whence that of the righteousness of works, but because these good fathers were afraid of giving occasion to evil-tongued or malignant men if they freely professed what is contained in the sacred Scriptures? And had not God, as it were by a strong hand, prevented Augustine, he would, in this respect, have been exactly like the rest. But God, so to speak, polishing him with a hammer, corrected that foolish wisdom, which rears its crest against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, we see, affirms that the Egyptians were so wicked, that God turned their hearts to hate his people. The middle-scheme men seek to evade and qualify this statement, by saying, that his turning their hearts, denotes his permitting this;[1] or, that when the Egyptians set their hearts upon hating the Israelites, he made use of their malice, as what, so to speak, came accidentally in his way; as if the Holy Spirit, from being defective in the power of language, spoke one thing, when he meant another. If the doctrine of this text, at first sight, seem strange to us, let us remember that God's judgments, in other places, are justly called "unsearchable," (Rom. xi. 33,) and "a great deep," (Ps. xxxvi. 6.) Did not our capacity fail in reaching

[1] "Chrysostom says that *he turned* is the same as *he permitted to turn*. See his note on the verse."—*Phillips.*

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the height of them, they would not have that intricacy and mystery by which they are characterised. It is, however, to be observed, that the root of the malice was in the Egyptians themselves, so that the fault cannot be transferred to God. I say, they were spontaneously and innately wicked, and not forced by the instigation of another. In regard to God, it ought to suffice us to know, that such was his will, although the reason may be unknown to us. But the reason is also apparent, which vindicates his righteousness from every objection. If we learn and keep in mind only this small word of advice, That the revealed will of God ought to be reverently acquiesced in, we will receive, without disputation, those mysteries which offend either the proud, or such as would be over-careful to remove the difficulties, in which, according to their view, such mysteries seem to be involved.[1] The prophet next expresses the manner in which the Egyptians wrought mischief against the people of God: they did not assault them openly, that they might put them to death, but they endeavoured, in the way of craft and policy, to oppress them by little and little. His expression is borrowed from Moses himself. And it is purposely used, that we may not think that the hearts of the ungodly are permitted without restraint to work our destruction. It is a consideration which ought surely to satisfy our minds, that whatever the devil and wicked men may plot against us, God nevertheless represses their attempts. But it is a double confirmation of our faith, when we hear that not only their hands are bound, but also their hearts and thoughts, so that they can purpose nothing except what God pleases.

26. *He sent Moses his servant.* Here the prophet briefly adverts to such things regarding the deliverance of the people as were worthy of particular notice. Had the Egyptians of their own accord suffered the people to depart, neither the service of Moses nor miracles would have been required. God then appointed that their deliverance should take place in such a way, as would render the denial of his

[1] "Ou ceux qui veulent estre trop prudens pour remedier aux inconveniens, ce leur semble."—*Fr.*

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being its author impossible. Moses is called *the servant of the Lord*, to teach us that he was not self-elected to his office, and that he attempted nothing by his own authority, but, being the minister of God, executed the office with which he had been intrusted. The same thing is expressed still more plainly with respect to Aaron, when he is said *to have been chosen*. What is attributed to each of these eminent men in particular, applies equally to both, and therefore the sentence ought to be explained thus: God sent Moses and Aaron, his servants, not because of their own intrinsic fitness, or because they spontaneously offered to him their service, but because he chose them. This passage teaches us, that those who are engaged in active and useful service for the Church, are not prepared exclusively by their own exertions, or framed to it by their own talents, but are stirred up thereto by God. Moses was a man of heroic virtue: but, considered merely in himself, he was nothing. Accordingly, the prophet would have all that is accounted worthy of remembrance in Moses, as well as in Aaron, to be ascribed to God alone. Thus it appears that whatever men do for the welfare of the Church, they owe the power of doing it to God, who, of his free goodness, has been pleased thus to honour them.

27. *They set among them the words of his signs.*[1] The prophet, in the first place, briefly glances at those things which Moses has detailed at greater length. Nor does he follow the order of the events observed in the history; for he contents himself with showing, that the deliverance of the chosen people was the work of God. He again distinguishes between the power of God, and the ministry of Moses and Aaron. He indeed asserts that these men performed *miracles*, but

[1] "*The words of his signs*,—*i. e.*, declarations; which were afterwards confirmed by miracles."—*Cresswell.* "In this phrase," says Hammond, "*the words of his signs* or *prodigies*, דברי, *words*, seems to be somewhat more than a pleonasm. God had told them what signs they should use, to convince the people first, and then Pharaoh, of their mission; and so in each judgment God commands, and they show the sign; and God's thus telling or speaking to them is, properly, דברי, *words*, and the matter of these words expressed by אותותיו, *signs* or *prodigies of his*,—viz., which as he directed, he would also enable them to do among them."

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these miracles proceeded from God, so that celestial power was not obscurely displayed by their instrumentality.

In the 28th verse he specifies one of these miracles, which yet was not the first in order, but from which it is easy to gather that God was the author of the deliverance of Israel, and in which the course of nature was entirely changed; for nothing is more astonishing than to see the light turned into darkness. In the second clause, he commends the faithfulness of Moses and Aaron, in courageously executing whatever God had commanded them: *And they were not rebellious against his words.*[1] There was, as if it had been said, the most perfect harmony between the command of God and the obedience of both his servants.

29. *He turned their waters into blood.* How grievous this plague was to the Egyptians may be conjectured from the consideration, that the element of water is one of the two great means of supporting life. And the power of God shines forth the brighter, from the fact, that although the land of Egypt is well irrigated, yet the Egyptians were parched with drought amidst abundance of water. It is afterwards said, that *frogs were brought forth,*[2] and entered even *into the chambers of the kings;* by which God manifestly

[1] They executed the command of God, with respect to the plagues brought on the Egyptians, although they knew that in thus acting they would incur the heavy displeasure of Pharaoh, and expose their lives to considerable danger. "The import of מרו לא, *they resisted not*," says Hammond, "seems no more than what is affirmed in the story, Exod. x. 21, 22, 'The Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thy hand.——And Moses stretched forth his hand,'—*i. e.*, readily obeyed, and did what God directed, and that at a time when Pharaoh was likely to be incensed, and vehemently offended with him and Aaron. For which consideration the story there gives us this farther ground: for as, verse 10, he had before expressed some anger and threats,—'Look to it, for evil is before you,' and 'they were driven from his presence,' verse 11; so now, upon the hardening his heart, which follows this plague of darkness, he said to Moses, 'Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more, for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die the death,' verse 28. This rage of Pharaoh, Moses in reason might well foresee, but he dreaded it not; but boldly did as God directed, and that is the meaning of 'they resisted not God's word.'"

[2] The Hebrew verb for *brought forth* is שרץ, *sharats*, which signifies *to multiply exceedingly;* and "the noun is used for creeping things, because they procreate in great abundance. It cannot therefore be more fitly translated, as is observed by Hammond, than by *swarming.*"—*Phillips.*

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evinced that he was the author of the miracle; for although all Egypt swarmed with frogs, the courts of the kings ought to have been exempt from this nuisance. By the term *kings*, is denoted either the nobles of the realm, or the king's sons, who were brought up in the expectation of the royal power; for at that time, as is well known, one king alone reigned over all Egypt. From this we learn how easily, and as it were by a kind of mockery, God humbles those who pride themselves in the flesh. He did not gather together an army to fight against the Egyptians, nor did he forthwith arm his angels, or thunder out of heaven, but brought forth frogs, which contemptuously trampled upon the pride of that haughty nation, who held in contempt the whole world beside. It would have been no disgrace for them to have been conquered by powerful enemies; but how dishonourable was it to be vanquished by frogs? God thus intended to show that he has no need of powerful hosts to destroy the wicked; for he can do this, as it were in sport, whenever he pleases.

31. *He spake, and there came a swarm of flies,*[1] *and lice*[2] *in all their borders.*

[1] The original word for *a swarm of flies* is עָרֹב, *arob*. For some account of the noxious insects here meant, see vol. iii. p. 258, note 2.

[2] The Hebrew word for *lice* is כִּנִּים, *kannim*. The reading in the Septuagint is σκνιφες, and in the Vulgate *sciniphes*, which signifies a species of little gnats that sting painfully in the marshy country of Egypt; the *culex reptans* of Linnæus, or the *culex molestus* of Forskal. In support of the accuracy of this interpretation it has been said, that as the translators of the Septuagint dwelt in Egypt, it can hardly be supposed that they were ignorant of what was intended by the Hebrew name. Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, and Origen, a Christian father, who likewise lived at Alexandria, have also been produced as confirming this interpretation. Both Philo and Origen represent these insects as being very small, but very troublesome. The latter describes them as winged insects, but so small as to escape any but the acutest sight; and says, that when settled on the body, they wound it with a most sharp and painful piercer. Jerome also supports this view, while Gesenius, Boothroyd, and others, concur in it. The Jewish interpreters, however, and Josephus, understand the original word as denoting *lice;* which has been adopted by the translators of our English Bible, and which Bochart likewise follows, with most of the modern commentators. Bochart argues that gnats could not be intended:—1. Because the creatures here mentioned sprang from the dust of the earth, and not from the waters. 2. Because they were both on men and cattle, which cannot be spoken of gnats. 3. Because

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32. *He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire upon their land.*
33. *And he smote their vines and their fig-trees; and destroyed the trees throughout their borders.*
34. *He spake, and the grasshopper came, and the caterpillar*[1] *without number,*
35. *And they devoured all the herbage in their land, and consumed the fruit of their ground.*
36. *And he smote all the first-born in their country, even the beginning of all their strength.*[2]
37. *And he brought them forth with silver and gold: nor was there a feeble person among his tribes.*
38. *Egypt rejoiced at their departure: for their terror had fallen upon them.*

31. *He spake, and there came a swarm of flies.* By the word their name comes from a root which signifies to make firm, fix, establish, which could not apply to gnats, flies, &c., as they are almost constantly on the wing. 4. Because כנה, *kinah*, is the term given by the Talmudists for *louse*. The translation given by Calvin, and in our English Bible, appears the most correct, but whichever we adopt, it is necessary to conclude (which the history expressly states) that the creatures were brought in swarms, most extraordinary even for Egypt, and thus a miraculous interposition was made manifest. This judgment was the more noisome and disgraceful to the Egyptians, from the great external purity which they affected, and from their being very nice both in their persons and clothing; bathing and making ablutions continually. They were particularly solicitous not to harbour any vermin, thinking it would be a great profanation of the temple which they entered, if any animalculæ of this sort were concealed in their garments.

[1] The Hebrew word translated *caterpillar* is ילק, *yelek*. This word is in our English Bible rendered *caterpillar* here, and in Jeremiah li. 27; but in Joel i. 4, ii. 25, and Nahum iii. 15, it is rendered *cankerworm*. In the passage in Nahum the creature is spoken of as winged and bristled, whence some commentators suppose that a kind of locust is intended. "It certainly means some insect remarkable for destroying vegetables, probably the 'chafer' or 'maybug,' βρουχος, as the LXX. render it in five passages out of eight wherein it occurs. The Vulgate throughout renders it *bruchus*, the 'chafer.' Michaelis thinks it means the 'chafer,' particularly in its *vermicular* state, when it is much more destructive to plants, namely, by gnawing, eating, and cankering their roots, than after it has taken wing."—*Parkhurst's Lexicon on* ילק, *under* לק, ii.

[2] *The beginning*, or *the first-fruit of all their strength*, is understood by Lowth to mean the first-born of the mother. His note on the verse in *Merrick's Annotations* is as follows:—"Απαρχὴν τόκου, *Primitias laboris* vel *partus*. LXX. *Vulg. Hieron.* Compare Gen. xxxv. 18. This, I think, is the right translation. The first-born, that were slain on this occasion, were those that opened the womb; the first-born of the mother, not of the father, as it appears from the circumstances of the history." The first-born of cattle is no doubt also intended.—See Gen. xlix. 3; and Psalm lxxviii. 51.

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spake, the Psalmist intimates that *the flies* and *lice* came not forth by chance. The command, we know, was uttered by the mouth of Moses; for although God could have given the command himself, he interposed Moses as his herald. God, however, gave no less efficacy to his word, when he commanded it to be uttered by a man, than if he himself had thundered from heaven. When the minister executes his commission faithfully, by speaking only what God puts into his mouth, the inward power of the Holy Spirit is joined with his outward voice. Here again it is to be observed, that the Egyptians were afflicted with the plague of the flies and lice, that God, with the greater ignominy, might subdue their rebellion and obstinacy. When it is said, that he *gave them hail for rain*, it denotes a hail of such appalling violence, that it could not be attributed to natural causes. It is probable that Egypt is not so subject to this annoyance as other countries, and it is very seldom visited even with rain, being watered with the Nile. This made it appear to the Egyptians the more wonderful that their country was stricken with hail. To render this calamity the more dreadful, God also mingled with it fire. The hail, then, was accompanied with a tempestuous whirlwind, that the Egyptians who had hardened themselves against the other miracles, inspired with terror, might know that they had to deal with God.

34. *He spake, and the grasshopper came.* This calamity, which was brought upon the fields, could not be attributed to Fortune; for the grasshoppers made their appearance suddenly and in countless multitudes, so that they covered all the land of Egypt. The miracle was very evident from the word spoken, by which it was introduced. Its being announced as to happen, removed all doubt of its being the work of the Most High. Accordingly, it is expressly said, that grasshoppers and caterpillars rushed in at the commandment of God, as if soldiers should run to battle at the sound of the trumpet. Whenever these insects molest us and destroy the fruits of the earth, they are assuredly the scourges of God, but it is here intended to point out an extraordinary work of his hand. In fine, the prophet recites the last miracle, which

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was wrought by the angel on the night previous to the departure of the people, when he slew all the first-born throughout Egypt. I only take a hasty and passing glance at this history, as I have, in like manner, done of the other facts preceding, because they have been more copiously treated elsewhere, and at this time it is sufficient for us to know the design of the sacred writer. He, however, amplifies this display of the Divine power by a repetition, declaring that *the first-born and the flower of their strength were destroyed.* Some translate, but unhappily, *The beginning of their sorrow.* As man's strength shows itself in generation, the Hebrews term the first-begotten *the beginning of strength,* as we have explained on Gen. xlix. 3,—"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength."

37. *And he brought them forth with silver and gold.*[1] The prophet, on the other hand, celebrates the grace of God which preserved the chosen people untouched and safe from all these plagues. If both parties had been indiscriminately afflicted with them, the hand of God would not have been so signally manifest. But now when the Israelites, amidst so many calamities, experienced an entire exemption from harm, this difference exhibits to us, as in a picture, God's fatherly care about his own people. For this reason, it is stated, *Nor was there a feeble person,* or *one who stumbled;*[2] for the verb כשל, *kashal,* has both these meanings. But I prefer taking it simply in this sense, That whilst Egypt was hastening to destruction, the people of God were vigorous, and free from every malady. When it is said, *He brought them forth,* and when it is afterwards added, *in his tribes,* there is a change of

[1] Allusion is made to the Israelites carrying with them in their departure from Egypt, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, which they borrowed of the Egyptians, Exod. xii. 36.

[2] "*And there was not any one stumbling among his tribes.* The LXX. have rendered כושל by ἀσθενης, *infirm,* so that they understood the Psalmist to say, there was no one incapable of following the multitude,—no one was prevented by disease or infirmity from accomplishing the journey."—*Phillips.* What a striking contrast between their condition and that of their oppressors! While in every Egyptian dwelling, death had left his victim, not one of all the children of Israel was unable to prosecute his heaven-directed flight from that land of bondage.

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the number, which is quite common in the Hebrew language. Some refer the word *his* to God; but this I am afraid is too forced.

38. *Egypt rejoiced at their departure.* The Psalmist sets forth the power of God from the additional circumstance, that the Egyptians willingly allowed the chosen people to depart, when yet nothing was farther from their intention. Although they wished them destroyed a hundred times, yet they thought that they had the wolf by the ears, as we say;[1] and thus the fear of revenge made them more determined to blot out the memory of that people. Whence it follows, that when they all at once laid aside their former purpose, it was a secret work of divine providence.[2] To the same effect is the statement in the preceding verse, *that they were brought forth with gold and silver.* The Egyptians could never have had the heart voluntarily to strip themselves, to enrich those whom they would have willingly deprived of life. This was then the bounty of God, in whose hand, and at whose disposal, are all the riches of the world. He might have taken by force from the Egyptians what he had given them; but he bowed their hearts, so that of their own accord they denuded themselves. The expression, *for their terror had fallen upon them,* is to be understood passively; for the Israelites were not afraid of the Egyptians, but, on the contrary, were terrible to them. Nor does the prophet speak of an ordinary fear. A little before fear had stirred them up to cruelty and tyranny; but as even to that day, they had endeavoured, with indomitable audacity, to shake off all fear, God suddenly laid them prostrate by the extraordinary terror which fell upon them. It is, therefore, here justly reckoned among the displays of the wonderful power of God, that he subdued the impetuous fury

[1] The meaning of this proverb is to be in danger, or hard set on every side; for if you hold the wolf, he bites you by the fingers; if you let him go, he may destroy you.

[2] From the heavy and overwhelming judgments inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people, for refusing to allow the Israelites to depart, they came to associate the presence of that people in their land, with the most terrible manifestations of divine displeasure. This at last led them, after all their inveterate impenitence, to hail with gratitude the departure of the hated tribes.

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with which the Egyptians boiled before, that they might allow those to depart free, whom they had determined to handle rudely, and to waste in servile employments; which was like rendering sheep terrible to wolves.

39. *He spread out a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light during the night.*
40. *They asked, and he brought quails,*[1] *and filled them with the bread of heaven.*
41. *He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.*
42. *For he remembered his holy promise, which he had spoken to Abraham his servant.*
43. *And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness.*

39. *He spread out a cloud for a covering.* The Psalmist enumerates certain miracles by which God continued his grace towards his people in the wilderness. This order is worthy of notice; for it was no small confirmation which was added to that incomparable work of redemption, when God ceased not to show himself the guide of their journey. Accordingly, after they had passed through the Red Sea, he spread a cloud over them by day to protect them from the heat of the sun; and during the night, he gave them light by a pillar of fire, that even in the midst of the darkness they might have a bright token of his presence. This continued display of his goodness was surely an unquestionable proof of his perpetual love, an open demonstration that he had adopted the children of Abraham, to foster them under his protection even to the end. What follows concerning *quails*, is introduced for a different purpose than that for which reference is made to the same fact in Ps. lxxviii. 26. In that passage, God's bringing in an abundance of quails is ascribed rather to his wrath than to his beneficence, that the people might satiate the flesh; and we have seen in the exposition of that place, that this is mentioned as a matter of reproach to them. But in the text before us, passing over their ingratitude, the

[1] See vol. iii. p. 248, note.

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prophet celebrates the unremitting exercise of the divine loving-kindness towards them. Some, however, may be rather inclined to take the word *ask* in a bad sense, because the people besought not God with humility,[1] but through their impatience proceeded at once to murmuring, or rather arrogantly spake against him. Thus taken, the passage, by way of amplification, would mean that God, departing from his own right, humoured even their unhallowed lust. As, however, their fault is not here mentioned, let us rest in that meaning which is the most simple, namely, that the blessings by which God ratified the redemption which he had wrought are here clustered together. It next follows, that *they were filled with the bread of heaven.* This appellation, as we have seen elsewhere, is given to the manna by way of eminence. The natural way in which the food which we eat is obtained is from the ground; but God then opened his hand more widely to the Jews, and fed them even from heaven. As it was not enough for them to be refreshed with food when they were hungry, unless they were also supplied with drink, it is added, that *the rock was opened,* and that *the waters flowed from it through the dry places,* or *the desert.*

42. *For he remembered his holy promise.* The Psalmist again mentions the cause why God dealt so graciously with that people, and sustained them so tenderly, namely, that he might fulfil his promise; for he had entered into a covenant with Abraham, engaging to be the God of his seed. Nor did the prophets without cause teach so carefully as we find them doing, that the free covenant is the fountain whence the deliverance, and the continual welfare of the people flowed. Thereby the grace of God became better known, since what took place, so far from happening upon the sudden, and without anticipation, was only the fulfilment of what he had promised four hundred years before. God then, for ages previous to this, gave the light of his word of promise, that his grace and truth might be brought the more distinctly into view.

[1] "It does not appear from the history, that the Israelites supplicated God at all, but only murmured against Moses and Aaron for bringing them into the wilderness."—*Phillips.*

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For this reason the prophet again repeats, that God was not led from some new cause to deliver his people, but that his design in doing so was to prove the faithfulness of his covenant, and to give it effect; just as if a man should dig up from the ground a treasure which he had buried in it. Nor is it to be doubted, that the prophet aimed at leading the faith of his countrymen still farther,—that his object was that their posterity might be persuaded beyond all doubt, that as God had then proved, in the experience of that generation, the sure and substantial truth of his promise delivered many hundred years before, so he would not be to them otherwise than their fathers had found him to be in times past. Accordingly, he signalises this promise by the epithet, *holy*, intimating, that after the death of Abraham it retained its virtue and efficacy unimpaired. God had spoken it to Abraham; but the force of the covenant died not with him. God continued to show himself faithful towards the posterity of the patriarch.

43. *And he brought forth his people with joy.* The prophet makes mention of *joy* and *gladness*, the more highly to magnify the greatness of God's grace. It was no small matter, that at the very time when the Egyptians were afflicted by a severe and dreadful plague,—when the whole kingdom was full of weeping and howling,—and when in almost every house there was a dead body,—the people who a little before were groaning in great distress, or rather lay almost dead, went forth with joyful hearts. By the appellation *the chosen of God*, they are reminded, that his favour was not thus exercised towards them on account of their own merits, or on account of the worth of their race, but because he had adopted them, that men having nothing left them in which to vaunt themselves might learn to glory in God alone.

44. *And he gave them the countries of the nations: and they possessed the labour of the peoples.*[1]

[1] That is, the products of their labour; their buildings, vineyards, cultivated fields, &c. The Israelites took possession of the land of Canaan, and of course possessed themselves of the advantages arising from its occu-

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45. *That they might observe his ordinances, and keep his law. Halleluiah.*

44. *And he gave them the countries of the nations.* The Psalmist sets forth the final cause why God in so many ways displayed his wonderful power in redeeming the people, why he did not cease to cherish and defend them in the desert,—why he gave them the possession of the land as he had promised; and this was, that they might dedicate and devote themselves wholly to his service. And, in fact, the end which God proposed in our election was, that he might have on the earth a people by whom he should be called upon and served. The more effectually to stir up the Jews to gratitude, the prophet magnifies the greatness of the divine goodness, by declaring, that they occupied far and wide *the countries of the nations*, and that all the property which many states had acquired with great labour, they now possessed as it were by right of inheritance. The plural number, both as to the word *countries* and *nations*, serves to exhibit in a still more striking light the divine goodness in this matter. The psalm concludes with briefly defining the manner of glorifying God, *That they might keep his law.* It would not be enough to celebrate his grace only with the tongue. To this there must be added practical and experimental piety. And as God rejects all religious services of men's invention, the only way of rightly serving him which remains, consists in keeping his commandments.

PSALM CVI.

This psalm differs from the preceding, inasmuch as there the Psalmist showed that God had been more than a bountiful father to his chosen people, in order to procure for himself, in coming ages, a race

pation, and cultivation by those who previously inhabited it.—See Deut. vi. 10, 11; Joshua xxiv. 13.

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of pure worshippers, while here he acknowledges that these remarkable benefits had been turned to a bad account; because the Jews from time to time threw off the yoke of God, basely abused his kindness, defiled themselves with many pollutions, and also perfidiously departed from his word. Nevertheless, it is not so much in the shape of a reproof or complaint, as a confession of their sins, in order to the obtaining the pardon of them. For the prophet commences with the praises of God, with the design of encouraging both himself and others to cherish good hope in him. Then he prays that God would continue his blessing to the seed of Abraham. But because the people, after so frequently revolting from God, were unworthy of the continuation of his kindness, he asks pardon to be extended to them, and this after he had confessed that from first to last, they had provoked God's wrath by their malice, ingratitude, pride, perfidy, and other vices.[1]

1. *Halleluiah.*[2] *Praise ye Jehovah; because he is good:*[3] *because his mercy endureth for ever.*
2. *Who shall express the power of Jehovah? who shall declare all his praise?*
3. *Blessed are they that keep judgment, and blessed is he who worketh in righteousness at all times.*[4]
4. *Remember me, O Jehovah! with the good will which thou bearest towards thy people: visit me with thy salvation;*
5. *That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, and glory with thy heritage.*

[1] The first and two last verses of this psalm form a part of that psalm which David delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to be sung before the ark of the covenant, after it was brought from the house of Obed-edom to mount Zion. See 1 Chron. xvi. 34–36. Hence it has been ascribed to the pen of David. Many of the ancients thought, and they are followed by Horsley and Mudge, that it was written during the captivity; resting their opinion chiefly on verse 47; but as that verse occurs in the psalm of David recorded in 1 Chron. xvi., at the 35th verse, this argument is clearly without force.

[2] "הללו יה, *Praise the Lord.* These words constitute the title, and are not to be considered as making any part of the text of the psalm. The Chaldee retains them as a title; the LXX. and Vulgate have the Hebrew words, which are joined into one; whilst the Syriac has in their stead a sort of table of contents of the psalm."—*Phillips.*

[3] "כי־טוב, *For he is good.* טוב is employed emphatically, denoting that God is good, without any mixture of evil, perfectly good in himself, and is, as it were, the fountain from which flows every good, and nothing but good. Hence we read in Matth. xix. 17, 'There is none good but one, that is, God.'"—*Ibid.*

[4] Bishop Horsley, following the Syriac, which reads משפטיו, and all the other versions, which read עשׂי, translates the verse, "Blessed are they that keep his judgments, and do righteousness at all seasons."

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1. *Praise ye Jehovah.* This exhortation supplies the want of a title; not that the psalm contains nothing else than thanksgiving and praise to God, but that the people, from the experience of past favours, may obtain the assurance of reconciliation; and thus entertain the hope that God, although at present offended, would soon be pacified towards them. In celebrating the praises of God, therefore, he orders them to call to mind such things as would have a tendency to assuage their grief on account of present ills, and to animate their spirits, and prevent them from sinking into despair.[1]

2. *Who shall express.* This verse is susceptible of two interpretations; for if you read it in connection with the one immediately following, the sense will be, that all men are not alike equal to the task of praising God, because the ungodly and the wicked do nothing else than profane his holy name with their unclean lips; as it is said in the fiftieth psalm: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" And hence to this sentence the following clause should have been annexed, in the form of a reply, *Blessed are they that keep judgment.* I am of opinion, however, that the prophet had another design, namely, that there is no man who has ever endeavoured to concentrate all his energies, both physical and mental, in the praising of God, but will find himself inadequate for so lofty a subject, the transcendent grandeur of which overpowers all our senses. Not that he exalts the power of God designedly to deter us from celebrating its praises, but rather as the means of stirring us up to do so to the utmost of our power. Is it any reason for ceasing our exertions, that with whatever alacrity we pursue our course, we yet come far short of perfection? But the thing which ought to inspire us with the greatest encouragement is, the knowledge that, though ability may fail us, the praises which from the heart we offer to God are pleasing to him; only let us beware of callousness; for it would certainly be very absurd for those who cannot attain to a tithe

[1] It is the province of faith to celebrate the divine mercy in the most trying circumstances.

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of perfection, to make that the occasion of their not reaching to the hundredth part of it.

3. *Blessed are they that keep judgment.* I make a distinction between this and the preceding verse, and yet so as to preserve the connection between them. For the prophet, having declared the magnitude of God's power to be such that no tongue could utter all its praises, now says, that the praises of the lip merely are not acceptable to God, but that the concurrence of the heart is indispensable, nay, that even the whole of our deportment must be in unison with this exercise. Now, when he first commands to *keep judgment*, and then to *work righteousness*, he gives us a short description of genuine godliness. I have no doubt, that in the former clause he describes the sincere affection of the heart, and that, in the latter, he refers to external works. For we know, there is nothing but the mere shadow of righteousness, unless a man cordially devote himself to the practice of honesty. He requires perseverance, too, that no one may imagine that he has discharged this duty properly, excepting he whose constant and continued aim it is to live righteously and justly. We behold not a few who have only an empty profession; others show some signs of virtue, but do not maintain a consistent course of conduct.

4. *Remember me.* By these words the prophet declares it to be his chief desire, that God would extend to him that love which he bore towards the Church, that he might thus become a participator of all the blessings which, from the very first, he bestows upon his chosen, and which day by day he continues with them. Nor does he desire this for himself alone, but in name of the Church Catholic, offers up a prayer alike for all, that, by his example, he might stimulate the faithful to present similar petitions.

Remember me, says he, *with the good will which thou bearest towards thy people;* that is to say, grant to me the same unmerited kindness which thou art pleased to confer upon thy people, that so I may never be cut off from thy Church, but always be included among the number of thy children; for the phrase, *good will towards thy people*, is to be understood passively of that

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love which God graciously bears to his elect. It is, however, by a metonymy employed by the prophet to point out the marks of God's love. For from this gracious source flows that proof which he actually and experimentally gives of his grace. But the prophet, if accounted to belong to the number of the people of God, would consider this to be the summit of true happiness; because, by this means, he would feel that God was reconciled to him, (than which nothing is more desirable,) and thus, too, he would experience that he was bountiful. The term, *remember*, relates to the circumstance of time, as we shall see towards the end of the psalm that it was penned when the people were in a state so sad and calamitous, that the faithful might entertain some secret apprehension that their God had forgotten them. To obviate this is the tendency of the next clause, *visit me with thy salvation.* For God is said to visit those from whom he had apparently withdrawn himself; and their salvation is a demonstration of his good-will towards them. In the next verse he repeats the same sentiment, *that I may see the good of thy chosen.* For he desires to be an associate and participator of the blessings which are constantly realised by the elect of God. The verb *to see*, is very plainly taken to denote the enjoyment of the blessings, as "to see the kingdom of God," (John iii. 3;) and "to see good and life," (1 Pet. iii. 10,) denote the corresponding blessings. Those who expound it, that I may see thee do good to the chosen, are mistaken; because the preceding verse upon which this depends will not bear this interpretation, and the exposition which I have given is supported by the words which follow, *that I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, and glory with thy heritage.* For it is quite obvious that the prophet is solicitous to become a sharer in all the benefits which are the portion of the chosen, that, satisfied with God alone, he may, under his providential care, live joyfully and happily. Whatever might be the then mournful state of the Church, the prophet, amid all such tumult, still clings fast by this principle, that there is nothing better than to be regarded as belonging to the flock and people of God, who will always prove the best of fathers to his own, and the

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faithful guardian of their welfare. All that he asks is, that God would deal with him, as he is wont to deal with his Church; and declares that he could not bear the thought of being severed or separated from the common lot of the Church. These words, however, imply a tacit complaint that at that time God was withholding his loving-kindness from his afflicted Church, as if he had cast her off altogether.

6. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have acted iniquitously, we have done wickedly.*
7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy kindnesses; they rebelled at the sea, even the Red Sea.*
8. *Yet he saved them for his own name's sake, that he might make his power to be known.*
9. *Also he rebuked the Red Sea, and dried it up; and made them walk through the depths, as through the desert.*
10. *And saved them from the hand of the enemy, and delivered them from the hand of the wicked.*
11. *And the waters covered their oppressors: there was not one of them left.*

6. *We have sinned with our fathers.* It is quite plain from these words, that although the prophet may have spoken in the person of one man, he yet dictates a form of prayer for the common use of the whole Church, seeing that he now identifies himself with the whole body. And from this to the end of the psalm, he gleans from ancient histories that their fathers had always been of a malign and perverse spirit, of corrupt practice, rebellious, ungrateful and perfidious towards God; and confesses that their descendants were not better; and having made this confession,[1] they come and ask the remission of their sins. And as we are unable to obtain the pardon of our sins until we have first confessed ourselves to be guilty of sin, and as our hardness of heart shuts out the grace of God from us, the prophet, therefore, with great propriety, humbly acknowledges the guilt of the people in this

[1] "Ils vienent à demander pardon de leurs pechez."—*Fr.*

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their severe and sore chastisement, and that God might justly inflict upon them a yet harder punishment. On another account it was advantageous for the Jews to have their sins set before them; because, if God punish us severely, we at once suppose that his promises have failed. But when, on the contrary, we are reminded that we are receiving the reward due to us for our transgressions, then if we thoroughly repent, those promises in which God appears as pacified towards us will come to our aid. Besides, by the three expressions which he employs in reference to their transgressions, he points out their enormity, that (as is usually the case) their hearts might not be slightly affected, but deeply wounded with sorrow. For we know how men are fettered by their vices, and how ready to let themselves alone, until compelled to examine themselves in good earnest; nay, what is more, when God calls them to judgment, they make a kind of verbal confession of their iniquities, while, at the same time, hypocrisy blinds their minds. When, therefore, the prophet says, that the *people acted iniquitously in sinning*, and had become ungodly and wicked, he employs no useless or unnecessary accumulation of words. Let any of us examine ourselves, and we will easily find that we have equal need to be constrained to make an ingenuous confession of our sins; for though we dare not say that we have no sin, yet there is not one of us but is disposed to find a cloak and subterfuge for his sin.

In a very similar manner, Daniel, in the ninth chapter of his prophecies, acknowledges the guilt of his own iniquities and those of the people; and it may be that the author of this psalm followed his example. From both let us learn, that the only way of pleasing God is to institute a rigid course of self-examination. Let it also be carefully observed, that the holy prophets, who never departed from the fear and worship of God, uniformly confessed their own guilt in common with the people; and this they did, not out of feigned humility, but because they were aware that they themselves were tainted with manifold corruptions, for when iniquity abounds, it is almost impossible for even the best of men to keep themselves from being infected by its baneful effects.

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Not comparing themselves with others, but sisting themselves before God's tribunal, they at once perceive the impossibility of making their escape.

At that time impiety had attained to such a degree of enormity among the Jews, that it is not astonishing if even the best and most upright men were carried away, as if by the violence of a tempest. How very abominable, then, is the pride of those who hardly imagine that they offend in the least possible way; nay, who even, like certain fanatics of the day, conceive that they have attained to a state of sinless perfection! It must be borne in mind, however, that Daniel, who carefully kept himself under the fear of God, and whom the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, declares to be one of the most upright of men, did not with feigned lips acknowledge his own transgressions, and those of the people, when he confessed them, under a deep sense of their grievously and dreadfully abhorrent character in the eyes of God. True, indeed, he was not overwhelmed in the same torrent of iniquity with others; but he knew that he had contracted a very large amount of guilt. Besides, the prophet does not bring forward their fathers for the purpose of palliating his own delinquency, (as many at the present day set at nought all reproof, shielding themselves with this, namely, that they have been so taught by their fathers, and that, therefore, their bad education, and not they, is at fault,) but rather to show that he and those of his own nation were obnoxious to severe punishment, because even from the very first, and as if co-existent with their early infancy, they never ceased to provoke the displeasure of God against themselves more and more by their fresh transgressions. It is in this manner that he involves the fathers with the children in many of the grounds of condemnation.[1]

7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* Here he relates how the people immediately, from the very commencement of their emancipation from bondage, were ungrateful to God, and conducted themselves in a rebellious manner. Nor

[1] "En beaucoup d'articles de condemnation."—*Fr.*

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does he confine himself to the history of one period only, but the whole drift of his narrative is to point out that the people had never ceased from doing wickedly, although God met them in return with inconceivable kindness; which is a proof of the invincible and desperate perversity of this nation. He first blames the folly of the people as the occasion of such ingratitude. In calling it folly, he does not intend to lessen the offence, (as some are often wont to do,) but to expose the vile and disgraceful stupidity of the people, in being blind in matters so plain; for God's works were such that even the blind might behold them. Whence could such gross ignorance originate, unless that Satan had so maddened them that they did not regard the miracles of God, which might have moved the very stones? Now, when he adds, *they remembered not*, he expresses more forcibly the inexcusable nature of their ignorance, nay, that their blindness was the result of stupid indifference, more than the want of proper instruction. For the cause of their ignorance was their overlooking those matters which, in themselves, were abundantly manifest. He further mentions how quickly that forgetfulness came upon them, which tended to increase their guilt. For it was marvellous that not even the very sight of these things could arouse their spirits. Hence it came to pass, that while they had scarcely made their departure from Egypt, and were passing through the sea, they proudly rose up against their deliverer. Surely not one year, nor even a century, ought to have erased from their minds deeds so worthy of being remembered. What madness, then, at that very time to murmur against God, as if he had abandoned them to be slaughtered by their enemies? That arm of the sea through which the people passed is, in the Hebrew, called *the Sea of Suph*. Some translate it *the Sea of Sedge*, and will have the word סוּף, *suph*, to signify *sea-weed*.[1] But whatever be its deriva-

[1] "*At the Red Sea, i.e., at the Arabian Gulf;* literally, *at the Sea of Suph*, which, if Suph be not here a proper name, (as it seems to be in Deut. i. 1, and, with a slight variation, in Num. xxi. 14,) means *the sea of weeds;* and that sea is still called by a similar name in modern Egypt. This, its designation throughout the books of the Old Testament, is in the Syriac version and the Chaldee paraphrase likewise rendered *the sea of weeds;* which name may have been derived from the

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tion, there can be no doubt about the place. It is very likely that the name was given to it because it abounded with rushes.

8. *And saved them.* The prophet here teaches what any one could easily learn from the preceding sentence, that the Israelites were saved, not on account of their deserving to be so, but because God had a regard to his own glory. That obstacle being removed, God went on to accomplish that deliverance which he had commenced, in order that his holy name might not become a reproach among the heathen. Besides, we must not overlook the antithesis between the *name of God* and the merits of men, because God, out of a regard to his own glory, can find in us no cause wherefore he should be moved to save us. The inestimable kindness of God, which, for the sake of a people so perverse, altered the usual order of nature, is more illustriously displayed by the account which is afterwards given of the means by which they were

weeds growing near its shore, or from the weeds, or coralline productions, with which, according to Diodorus Siculus and Kircher, it abounded; and which were seen through its translucent waters. Finati, quoted by Laborde, speaks of the transparency of its waters, and the corals seen at its bottom."—*Cresswell.* It has sometimes been asserted that this sea received the appellation of *Red* from its colour. But it has been abundantly attested by those who have seen it, that it is no more red than any other sea. Niebuhr, in his description of Arabia, says, "The Europeans are accustomed to give the Arabian Gulf the name of Red Sea; nevertheless, I have not found it any more *red* than the Black Sea or the White Sea, or any other sea in the world." Artemidorus in Strabo expressly tells us that "it looks of a *green* colour, by reason of the abundance of *sea-weed* and moss that grow in it;" which Diodorus Siculus also asserts of a particular part of it. It appears to have derived its name of "Red Sea" from Edom, which signifies *red.* Although throughout the whole Scriptures of the Old Testament it is called *Yam Suph, the weedy sea,* yet among the ancient inhabitants of the countries adjoining it was called *Yam Edom, the sea of Edom,* (1 Kings ix. 26; 2 Chron. viii. 17, 18,) the land of Edom having extended to the Arabian Gulf; and the Edomites or Idumeans having occupied at one time a part, if not the whole, of Arabia Petræa. The Greeks, who took the name of the sea from the Phœnicians, who called it *Yam Edom,* instead of rendering it *the sea of Edom,* or, *the Idumean Sea,* as they ought to have done, took the word Edom, by mistake, for an appellative, instead of a proper name, and accordingly rendered it ἐρυθρὰ θαλασσα, that is, *the Red Sea.* Hence the LXX. translate *Yam Suph,* by the *Red Sea;* in which they have been followed by the authors of our English version. But *the sea of weeds* is undoubtedly the best translation of the Hebrew text.—See *Prideaux' Connections, &c.,* vol. i. pp. 39, 40.

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preserved. When he says that the *sea was rebuked*, he extols the power of God, at whose command and will the sea was dried up—the waters receded, so that a free passage was opened up between the opposite heaps of waters. With the design of magnifying the miracle, he employs a similitude, which, in all likelihood, was drawn from Isaiah; for in the sixty-third chapter and thirteenth verse, he says, "Thou hast made thy people to walk through the deeps, as an horse in the wilderness, that he might not stumble." When the people walked through the sea as upon a dry plain, the prophet informs us that this was done solely by the astonishing power of God. It is quite possible, that in the desert in which the people wandered, there was many an abyss, the path rugged, and many a hill and dale and ragged rock. But it cannot be doubted that the prophet extols the power of God in the passage through the sea, and enhances it by this consideration, that the path through that deep sea was smooth. Besides, he gives greater strength to the miracle in saying that *their enemies were drowned;* because, when the sea afforded a free passage to the children of Israel, and covered and engulfed the Egyptians, so *that not one of them escaped alive*, whence proceeded this instantaneous difference, but from this, that God made a distinction between the one people and the other?

12. *Then they believed his words; they sang his praises.*
13. *They made haste, and forgot his works; they did not attend to his counsel;*
14. *And lusted greatly in the desert, and tempted God in the wilderness.*
15. *And he gave them their desire; but sent leanness into their soul.*

12. *Then they believed his words.* In stating that they believed God's word, and sang his praise, the prophet does not say this to their commendation, but rather to increase, in a twofold manner, their guilt; because, being convinced by such indubitable testimony, they yet instantly resumed their wonted disposition of mind, and began to rebel against God, as if they had never beheld his wonderful works. How very in-

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excusable was that impiety which in a moment could forget the remarkable benefits which they had been constrained to admit! Overpowered by the grandeur of God's works, they were, he says, in spite of themselves, compelled to believe in God, and give glory to him, and thus the criminality of their rebellion was increased; because, although their stubbornness was overcome, yet they immediately relapsed into their former state of unbelief. A question, however, arises, seeing that true faith always corresponds with the nature of the word, and as the word is an incorruptible seed, so though it may happen to be almost, it never can be totally destroyed. But there is a temporary faith, as Mark calls it, (iv. 17,) which is not so much a fruit of the Spirit of regeneration, as of a certain mutable affection, and so it soon passeth away. It is not a voluntary faith which is here extolled by the prophet, but rather that which is the result of compulsion, namely, because men, whether they will or not, by a sense which they have of the power of God, are constrained to show some reverence for him. This passage ought to be well considered, that men, when once they have yielded submission to God, may not deceive themselves, but may know that the touchstone of faith is when they spontaneously receive the word of God, and constantly continue firm in their obedience to it.

In order to point out the inconstancy of the people, he says, *they made haste.* Some explain this in the following manner, namely, that after they had set out on their journey, they hastened to come to the place called Marah. This, however, is to give a very tame representation of the emphatic style in which the prophet speaks, when severely reprehending their hasty and headlong departure from the way, in that they believed only for a very short time, and speedily forgot God's works; for they had only journeyed three days from their passage through the sea till they came to Marah, and yet they began to murmur against God, because they could not procure pleasant waters.[1] Meantime, we must here observe

[1] The history to which reference is here made is recorded in Exod. xv. We read in the 22d verse of that chapter, that the Israelites "went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the wilderness, and

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what we have seen elsewhere, that the alone cause why men are so ungrateful towards God, is their despising of his benefits. Were the remembrance of these to take fast hold of our hearts, it would serve as a bridle to keep us in his fear. The prophet declares what their transgression was, namely, that they did not suspend their desires till a fitting opportunity occurred for granting them. The insatiable nature of our desires is astonishing, in that scarcely a single day is allowed to God to gratify them. For should he not immediately satisfy them, we at once become impatient, and are in danger of eventually falling into despair. This, then, was the fault of the people, that they did not cast all their cares upon God, did not calmly call upon him, nor wait patiently until he was pleased to answer their requests, but rushed forward with reckless precipitation, as if they would dictate to God what he was to do. And, therefore, to heighten the criminality of their rash course, he employs the term *counsel;* because men will neither allow God to be possessed of wisdom, nor do they deem it proper to depend upon his counsel, but are more provident than becomes them, and would rather rule God than allow themselves to be ruled by him according to his pleasure. That we may be preserved from provoking God, let us ever retain this principle, That it is our duty to let him provide for us such things as he knows will be for our advantage. And verily, faith divesting us of our own wisdom, enables us hopefully and quietly to wait until God accomplish his own work; whereas, on the contrary, our carnal desire always goes before the counsel of God, by its too great haste.

14. *And they lusted.* He goes on, according to the his-

found no water." They then came to Marah, where there was abundance of water; but it was so bitter that they could not drink of it. Being thus disappointed in the hopes with which the first sight of these waters inspired them, they murmured against Moses, and said, "*What shall we drink?*" How rapid the transition from gratitude and praise to discontent and murmuring! No sooner did a new trouble befall that people, than they forthwith yielded to impatience, forgat the long series of miracles which had been wrought for their deliverance from Egypt, and distrusting God, appeared to be at once prepared to break out in rebellion against him and Moses their leader.

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tory, to mention the sin which, agreeably to the duty of his office as a teacher, he had briefly noticed. Should any one inquire in what way they did not attend to God's counsel, he answers, because they had indulged in the gratification of their lusts; for the only way of acting with proper moderation is, when God rules and presides over our affections. It is therefore the more necessary to bridle that strong tendency to fleshly lusts which naturally rage within us. For whoever allows himself to desire more than is needful, openly sets himself in direct opposition to God, inasmuch as all fleshly lusts are directly opposed to him.

To tempt God is not to acquiesce in his will, but to desire more than he is willing to grant. And since there are a variety of modes of tempting God, the prophet here adverts to one mode of doing so, namely, that the people had been so presumptuous as to limit God to means of their own devising; and thus, in rejecting the way which they ought to have followed, they ascribed to God a property altogether novel, as much as to say, If God do not feed us with flesh we will not regard him as God. He gave them the food which ought to have satisfied them. And though God is not limited by any means whatsoever, yet it is his will that our minds be rendered subservient to the means which he has appointed. For instance, although he can nourish us without bread, nevertheless it is his will that our life be sustained by such provision; and if we neglect it, and wish to point out to him another way of nourishing us, we tempt his power.

15. *He gave them their desire.* There is a fine paronomasia in the word רָזוֹן, *razon*, for if, instead of ז, *zain*, we read צ, *tsādhé*, the word would signify *good pleasure*. The prophet, therefore, in allusion to their lusting, by a word which is very similar to good pleasure or desire, says that *God sent leanness into their souls;* meaning by that, that he had indeed gratified the inordinate desires of the people, in such a way, however, as that those who had loathed the manna, now received nothing but leanness.[1] Thus the prophet would

[1] The reference here is to the quails which God granted to the people in answer to their request for flesh, but which, from the excess in which

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seem to charge the people with what we daily observe among those who live luxuriously and are fastidious, especially when their stomach, in consequence of the fluids poured into it, being vitiated, has no relish for wholesome food. For such persons only relish that food which is pernicious; and, therefore, the more they pamper themselves with it, so much the more do they become the creatures of noxious habits; and thus in a very short time, the very food itself makes them pine away. The prophet seems, therefore, to apply to the mind what he says about the unhealthy state of the body, and to compare the Jews to those morbid persons, whose voraciousness, instead of promoting health, injures it, because they do not derive any nourishment from their food. The reason is, that God withheld his blessing from the food which they had so immoderately longed for, in order that this their punishment for their transgression might humble them. But their perversity is seen to be very great, in that even this mode of punishing them did not overcome their stubborn hearts. It is a proverbial saying, that fools learn wisdom from the experience of evil. How insane and incorrigible must they have been, whom even compulsion itself could not reform!

they partook of them, so far from affording nourishment, proved the cause of disease. When food of an unwholesome quality, or too much of that which is wholesome, is eaten, nature with much violence seeks to throw it off from the system by the several evacuations, upon which follows a sudden and almost incredible deprivation of strength and flesh. The Israelites, when God gave them the quails, having indulged their appetite to an immoderate degree, (Exod. xvi. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 25, 29,) the effect was their being seized with a sudden and wasting sickness, which is supposed by some to have been what is called cholera, a disease which produces a rapid prostration of strength and emaciation of the whole frame. This opinion seems confirmed from what is stated in Num. xi. 20, where it is threatened that the quails should "come out at their nostrils," probably indicating the violent vomitings which accompany that malady. It is indeed said, that the *Lord smote* the people with a very great plague, Num. xi. 33. But God's agency, and even his miraculous agency, admits of the subserviency of means. French and Skinner read the clause, "But sent a wasting disease among them." "The word רזה, *to attenuate, emaciate*," says Hammond, "is used also for *destroying*, Zeph. ii. 11, when God threatens that he will *emaciate, i. e., destroy all the gods*. And then רזון may be rendered, more generally, destruction or plague, and so R. Tanchum on Zephaniah renders it *destruction*."

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16. *And they envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of Jehovah.*
17. *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered over the tent of Abiram.*
18. *And a fire was kindled in their assembly, and the flame consumed the wicked.*
19. *They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped before the molten image.*
20. *And they changed their glory into the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.*
21. *They forgot God their preserver, who had done great things in Egypt;*
22. *And wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things at the Red Sea.*

16. *And they envied.* He refers here very shortly to another transgression, and that, too, in such a way as to furnish both to himself and others ample grounds for deep consideration. For, as the people, in devising from time to time new modes of sinning, displayed so much cunning in their attempts to provoke God's anger, so we ought the more to be filled with fear on that account. Moreover, when he says that they *envied Moses and Aaron*, his meaning is, that, acting under the influence of diabolic pride, they had risen up against God, and were endeavouring to throw off the yoke which he had laid upon them; according as Moses also said, "What am I, and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against us?" (Num. xvi. 11.) As it was the will of God to rule the people by means of Moses and Aaron, not to submit to their rule was virtually to set themselves obstinately to resist the authority of God himself. There is therefore great importance attached to the term, *envy*, namely, that at the very time when God was treating the children of Israel with the utmost kindness and care, they yet were discontented with their lot, and rebelled against him. Could such madness serve any other purpose than to show, that, casting off all farther dependence upon the providence of God for their support, they aspire to rise above the very heavens? In this sense Aaron is called *the saint of Jehovah*,[1] in order that

[1] "*The saint, i. e.*, a man consecrated with holy oil to the office of

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we might know that both he and Moses were equally identified with God; for under the person of the one, the designation is applied to both, and in this way the prophet shows that they had been Divinely invested with that authority which they were exercising. In renouncing their authority, therefore, and, to the utmost of their power, dishonouring these saints, Dathan and Abiram were rebelling not against men, but against God.

17. *The earth opened.* The heinousness of their sin may be seen in the magnitude of the punishment by which it was visited. But the design of the prophet was to accuse and reprove publicly the obstinacy of the people, who, so far from being bettered by their corrections, (although the vengeance of God was so terrible as almost to move the very stones,) conducted themselves the more perversely. That was surely an awfully ominous event, when *the earth swallowed up alive Dathan and Abiram*, and all their accomplices; and when fire coming down from heaven consumed[1] them, according to the saying of Moses, "If any thing common happen to these men, then believe not that God who ruleth in heaven rules over you and me; but if this new and extraordinary thing happen, namely, that the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, then indeed believe that I am sent by God," (Num. xvi. 29.) When the Israelites were so infatuated as to rise in rebellion against God, then did the terrible nature of their distemper appear in that it could not be cured by the stringent remedy which was applied to it. And as even hypocrites are afraid when they feel the severity of God, it was the height of folly in them to fret and quarrel with God when he was visiting their iniquities with stripes. Should any one ask why God charges the faults of a few upon the whole body of

the priesthood, and wearing on his mitre a plate inscribed, 'Holiness to the Lord,' (Exod. xxviii. 36.")—*Cresswell.* "קדוש יהוה, *holy of the Lord.* Aaron is thus called, because he was separated from the whole congregation of Israel, and appointed to direct the public worship, and to offer the sacrifices. In reference to this, Moses said to Korah, 'The Lord will show who are His, and who is holy,' (Num. xvi. 5.")—*Phillips.*

[1] The fire consumed two hundred and fifty, and fourteen thousand and seven hundred died of the plague.—Num. xvi. 35, 49.

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the people? the answer is obvious; for although there were only two individuals who were the principal abettors of the conspiracy, and along with them two hundred and seventy seditious persons, yet it would seem, from the murmurings and cavillings of the whole congregation, that they also were affected with the same distemper. The punishment did not extend beyond the captains[1] and ringleaders of this wicked conspiracy, it being the design of God to mitigate it, and to spare the people at large, who nevertheless had been most desirous of innovation, seeing they could not endure the authority of Moses and Aaron.

19. *They made a calf.*[2] Here he represents their rebellion as exceedingly base, in that they abandoned the true worship of God, and made to themselves a calf. For although it was their intention to worship God in this manner, yet the prophet reprehends their brutal stupidity, because *they worshipped before the molten image,*[3] and represented God *by the figure of an ox which eateth grass.*[4] From this the prophet infers, that God had been robbed of his honour, and that all his glory had been tarnished. And surely it is so; for although the idolaters feign to serve God with great zeal, yet when, at the same time, they represent to themselves a God visible, they abandon the true God, and impiously make for themselves an idol. But he reproaches them with being guilty of

[1] "Capitaines et portenseignes."—*Fr.*

[2] This idol seems to have been an imitation of the Egyptian God Apis, or Serapis, a word which signifies the head of an ox, the Egyptians having exalted that animal to the rank of a god whom they absurdly worshipped, and to whom they resorted as to an oracle. "The modern Jews assert, that their ancestors were in that matter misled by certain Egyptian proselytes, who had accompanied the Israelites when they were delivered from their bondage. The Psalmist, it may be remarked, does not observe the order of time in his narrative, the making of the calf being prior to the fate of Dathan and Abiram.—Comp. Exod. xxxii. 4, 5."—*Cresswell.*

[3] "More properly, 'the overlaid image;' or, more literally still, 'the metalline shell.'"—*Horsley.* "The Hebrew word," says Mant, "here, as elsewhere, rendered by our translators 'molten image,' strictly and properly means 'the metalline case' or 'covering spread over' the carved wood. It is often joined with the 'carved' wooden 'image' which it covered. Aaron's calf was thus made of wood, and overlaid with gold."

[4] "*That eateth hay*—the Egyptians, when they consulted Apis, presented a bottle of hay or of grass, and if the ox received it, they expected good success."—*Cresswell.*

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still greater impiety, when he says, *after the likeness of an ox that eateth grass;* and contrasts with it *their honour* or *glory.* For seeing that God had clothed them with his own glory, what madness was it to substitute in place of him not only an ox, but the inanimate form of an ox, as if there were any resemblance between God who createth all kinds of food, and that stupid animal which feeds upon grass?

It is necessary, however, to observe the design of the prophet, which is to point out the blindness of men as more base and abominable, because not contenting themselves with any common form of superstition, but casting off all shame, they give themselves up to the most shocking forms of worshipping God. Had the people formed for themselves a likeness of God under the likeness of a man, even that would have been impiously robbing God of his due; how much more shameful was their conduct when they assimilated God to an ox? When men preserve their life by eating and drinking, they acknowledge how frail they are, because they derive[1] from dead creatures the means of its continuation. How much greater is the dishonour done to God when he is compared to the brutal tribes? Moreover, the comparison referred to increases the enormity of their guilt. For what credit was it for a holy people to worship the inanimate likeness of an ox instead of the true God? But God had condescended to spread out the overshadowing wings of his glory upon the children of Abraham, that he might put on them the highest honour. Therefore, in denuding themselves of this honour, they had exposed their own baseness to the derision of all the nations of the earth. And hence Moses employs the phrase *of nakedness,* when he is showing that crime of idolatry: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies,") Exod. xxxii. 25. Should any one be disposed to say that the ark of the covenant was a representation of God, my answer is, That that symbol was given to the children of Israel, not to engross the whole of their attention, but only for the purpose of assisting and directing them in the spiritual worship of God.

[1] "Empruntent des creatures mortes la continuation d'icelle."—*Fr.*

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21. *They forgot God.* The prophet again repeats that the people had sinned not simply through ignorance, but also wilfully, inasmuch as God had already given a very palpable manifestation of his power and glory. And as he makes himself known in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, the blindness of men is totally inexcusable. But far more aggravating is the sin of the children of Israel, who, after God had made himself known to them, in the most condescending manner, cast him off altogether, and gave themselves up to the practice of brutish idolatry. And God having from heaven put forth his Almighty power for their salvation, there must surely be no little importance attached to such displays of his power as proclaim the praise and honour of his great name. Had he merely given an ordinary token of his power, even that ought to have attracted so much consideration as should have kept the people in the fear and worship of God. Now, that these miracles were so very notable, or rather terrible and rare, the people acted a very base part to shut their eyes upon them, and give themselves over to idolatry. For as the darkness is dispelled by the beamy lustre of the sun, so all inventions and perverse errors should vanish before such knowledge of God.

23. *And he said that he would destroy them, unless that Moses his chosen had stood in the breach before his face, to turn away his wrath, that he might not destroy them.*
24. *And they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his word;*
25. *And they murmured in their tents, and did not listen to the voice of Jehovah.*
26. *And he lifted up his hand against them, to destroy them in the desert:*
27. *And to destroy their seed among the heathen, and to scatter them throughout the lands.*[1]

[1] Some interpreters, as Mudge and Horsley, have felt great difficulty in interpreting this verse. "Nothing," says the latter critic, "was said about overthrowing the seed, at the time when the adults, which came out of Egypt, were sentenced to perish in the wilderness. On the contrary, it was promised that their little ones, *i.e.*, those who were under the age of twenty years at the time of the general muster, should be settled in the land of Canaan.—See Numbers xiv." He farther adds,

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23. *And he said.* The prophet informs us, by these words, that the people had a feeling sense of their remarkable deliverance from impending destruction, by means of prayer alone, which, for a season, restrained God's vengeance from bursting forth against them. In a very short time, however, they return to their wonted disposition of mind, a striking proof of the awful perversity of their hearts. To represent how highly God was offended, the prophet says that he had purposed to destroy the transgressors: not that God is subject to human passions, to be very angry for a little, and then immediately afterwards, on being appeased, changes his purpose; for God, in his secret counsel, had resolved upon their forgiveness, even as he actually did pardon them. But the prophet makes mention of another purpose, by which God designed to strike the people with terror, that coming to know and acknowledge the greatness of their sin, they might be humbled on account of it. This is that repentance so frequently referred to in the Scriptures. Not that God is mutable in himself; but he speaks after the manner of men, that we may be affected with a more feeling sense of his wrath: like a king who had resolved to pardon an offender, yet sisted him before his judgment-seat, the more effectually to impress him with the magnitude of the kindness done to him. God, therefore, while he keeps to himself his secret purpose, declared openly to the people that they had committed a trespass which deserved to be punished with eternal death. Next he says that *Moses stood in the breach*, meaning that he had made intercession with God, lest his awful vengeance might

that "nothing was said at the time alluded to about scattering the seed, which should be settled in Canaan, in some future period, through the lands." And he concludes his note on the verse by observing, that, upon the whole, he could not explain it to his own satisfaction. But there seems in the passage to be a reference to those prophetical denunciations afterwards uttered, by which God threatened that he would punish the sins of the Israelites, not only in their own persons, but also in their posterity;—denunciations which have been fulfilled in the various dispersions of that people, and which are fulfilling at the present day.—Lev. xxvi. 33; Deut. xxviii. 64. "It is obvious," says Dr Morison, "that those interpreters are mistaken who refer the allusions of the 27th verse to the same history as those of the 26th. The people overthrown in the wilderness were to be destroyed by pestilence; but the overthrow threatened in the 27th verse was by banishment and captivity."

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break forth among the people. There is here an allusion to the manner in which cities are stormed; for if a breach is made in the wall by any of the various engines which are employed in war, brave soldiers will instantly throw themselves into the breach to defend it.[1] Hence Ezekiel reproaches the false prophets, who, unlike Moses, deceiving the people by their flatteries, making, as it were, a mud-wall, do not place themselves in the breach in the day of battle. "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord," Ezek. xiii. 5. Some expositors are of opinion that the prophet refers to the separation which the people had made among themselves in violating the covenant of God, and the sacred relation in which they stood to each other; but the meaning is the same. For in that breach which gave rise to this metaphor or similitude, God, in defending his people so faithfully, was to them in place of a wall or bulwark. Having provoked him to anger anew, he was about to rush upon them for their destruction, had not Moses interposed as their intercessor.

24. *And they despised.* It was an evident demonstration of the unconquerable wickedness of the Jews, that, after they had been in the jaws of destruction, and while they had scarcely escaped from danger so great and so imminent, they rose up in rebellion against God. What was the cause of this rebellion? The despising of the Holy Land,

[1] The sins of the people had opened *a breach* or *gap*, for God as an enemy to enter and destroy them. But, like soldiers who stand in the breach that has been made in the walls of a beleaguered city to oppose the irruption of the enemy, Moses, by his earnest prayer, stopped this breach, Exod. xxxii. 11-14. "Moses is here mentioned in the character of a mediator, under the figure of one standing in the breach of the wall of a city made by besiegers, to oppose any farther hostile aggressions. The figure of *a breach* is frequently employed in Scripture to denote some destruction by God. Thus in Judges xxi. 15, God made *a breach*, פֶּרֶץ, in the tribes of Israel, *i.e.*, He destroyed one of the tribes, viz., that of Benjamin: see also 2 Sam. vi. 8; Ezek. xxii. 30. Hence in this passage we understand that God would have destroyed the Israelites, had not Moses stood in the breach, *i.e.*, interceded by his prayers, just at the time when the divine judgments were about to be executed. The Chaldee has paraphrased it thus, *If Moses had not stood before Him and prevailed in prayer*, *i.e.*, arrested the destruction."—*Phillips.*

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which of all things ought to have been most desired by them. The country of Canaan, which had been destined to them, as the place where they were to be brought up under God's paternal care, and as a people separated from heathen nations were to worship him only, and which, also, was more especially to them a pledge of the heavenly inheritance,—this country here, and in several other passages, is very properly called *the pleasant land.* Was it not, then, the basest ingratitude to despise the holy habitation of God's chosen people? To the cause of this scorn the prophet refers, when he says, *they did not believe God's word.* For had they laid hold upon God's promise with that faith which it was incumbent upon them to do, they would have been inflamed with such a strong desire for that land, that they would have surmounted all obstacles which might occur in their way to it. Meanwhile, not believing his word, they not only refuse the heritage which was offered to them, but excite a rebellion in the camp, as if they would rise up in arms against God.

26. *And he lifted up.* He describes another example of the vengeance of God, the recollection of which ought to have been deeply seated in their hearts, so that cherishing a constant fear of him, they might watch over themselves with the utmost solicitude. No good having ensued from all this, it is obvious that the madness of that people was incurable. At that time God did restrain his anger, in that he did not disperse their offspring throughout various parts of the earth; but his threatening of itself ought to have sufficed for the subduing of their pride, had they not been incorrigible. *To lift up the hand* is in this passage susceptible of two meanings. In Scripture God is frequently said to lift up his hand to inflict punishment. But as it is generally admitted that the prophet is here speaking of swearing,[1] with this opinion I most readily coincide. The practice of lifting up the hand, as if they would have called God down from

[1] The passage refers to the oath which God swore against that people recorded in Num. xiv. 21-23. To the same oath there is an allusion in Ps. xcv. 11. The Chaldee paraphrast has, "He lifted up his hand with an oath."

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heaven, was a solemn usual rite among them, accompanying an oath; and is therefore improperly applied to God, whose sublimity rises above all things, and who, as the apostle says, cannot swear by a greater than himself, Heb. vi. 13. In employing it, therefore, it must be understood that he borrows it from the common customs which prevail among men. Had not the Holy Land been preserved to the people by the prayers of Moses, awful indeed would their dispersion have been.

28. *And they joined themselves to Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.*
29. *And they provoked God to anger by their works*:[1] *and the plague broke out among them.*
30. *And Phinehas stood up, and executed justice: and the plague was stopped.*
31. *And that deed was imputed to him for righteousness from generation to generation for ever.*

28. *And they joined themselves to Baal-peor.* The prophet tells us that the Jews, after they had been threatened with very awful punishment, very soon fell into a new species of apostacy. Some think, that they are indirectly accused of falling away to the superstitions of the Midianites, in consequence of having been imposed upon by female intrigue. This, it is well known, was the design of Balaam, as soon as he knew that he was forbidden by God to curse the people. His counsel to king Balak was to set the daughters of Moab before the people, to entice them by their allurements to the practice of idolatry, Num. xxxi. 16, "Behold, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor." And as the idolatry here mentioned originated from carnal intrigues, some expositors are of opinion, that on this account the prophet charges the people with the commission of a twofold trespass, in their not only being inveigled by the Midianitish women, but also in binding themselves by another bond to

[1] In our English Bible it is "their inventions." "Rather," says Horsley, 'their frolics.'"

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Baal-peor, Num. xxv. Be that as it may, the prophet exclaims against the perfidy of his own nation, because in forsaking the true worship of God, they had broken that holy union by which they had been betrothed to him. For we know, that as God adopts the Church as his spouse, when she gives herself up to idolatry, she no less shamefully violates her fidelity, than when a wife leaves her husband, and becomes an adulteress. It is well known, that Baal-peor was the idol of the Midianites; but it is not so well known how he received this appellation. The word בַּעַל, *Baal*, has a signification[1] equivalent to *lord*, *master*, or *patron*. And since פָּעַר, *paar*, signifies *to open*, some render it *the God of opening*, and assign as a reason, which, however, I dare not affirm, their shamefully exposing themselves in his presence. Perhaps it is the name of some place, for we know that the heathens often gave to their idols the names of the countries where they were worshipped.[2] We now perceive the prophet's

[1] "Signifie aûtant comme Maistre ou Patron."—*Fr.*

[2] Baal was a very common name of the principal male god of the nations of the East, as Ashtaroth was a common one for their chief female deity. The Moabites, Phœnicians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and often the Hebrews, worshipped this idol. Among the Babylonians, he was called Bel or Belus. The sun only might at first be worshipped under that name, as we know that under it the Phœnicians adored that luminary. But at length it came to be applied to many other idols, according to these words of the Apostle, "There be gods many, and *baalims*, or lords many," 1 Cor. viii. 5. As the idol Jupiter among the Romans had different names and different rites of worship, occasioned sometimes from the different benefits which he was thought to bestow upon men, as Jupiter Pluvius, because he gave rain, Jupiter Lucetius, because he gave light, Jupiter Altitonans, from thundering; and sometimes from different places—as Jupiter Olympius, from the hill Olympus, Jupiter Capitolinus, from the Capitol hill, Jupiter Latialis, from that part of Italy which is called Latium: so Baal had his distinctive titles, and different rites of worship, occasioned in the same manner. He sometimes received his name from the benefits he was supposed to confer, as Baal-tsephon, (Exod. xiv. 1,) the latter term denoting *a watcher*, and Baal-zebub, (2 Kings i. 2,) which signifies *the lord of the flies*. He was worshipped under this last name by the Cyrenians, but principally by Ekronites, because, whenever they sacrificed to him, they believed that the swarms of flies, which at that time molested the country, would die. At other times he received a distinctive appellation from the places where he was worshipped, as Baal-peor, from the hill Peor, mentioned in Num. xxiii. 28; and his temple, whither his votaries resorted, standing on the same hill, was called *Beth-peor*, Deut. iii. 29. Possibly, however, the mountain might have taken its name from the god that was there worshipped. The idol named *Chemosh*, in Jer. xlviii. 7, is thought to be the same as Baal-peor. "I take it," says Goodwin, "to be applied to

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meaning, That the Jews had wickedly revolted from God, and defiled themselves in joining themselves to Baal-peor. In saying that they *ate the sacrifices of the dead*,[1] he points out the greater baseness of their offence. By the sacrifices of idols, he means that they ate things that were offered to idols, as they had been wont to partake of those sacrifices which bound them to the true God, the inexhaustible fountain of life. Hence their conduct was the more detestable, when they wilfully gave themselves over to death by perpetrating such a heinous crime. And we know, that banqueting was to some extent connected with their worship. The result of this was, that, renouncing the true God, they joined themselves in marriage with the dead; and thus the prophet charges them with acting a very disgraceful part, in not only bowing the knee to Baal, and offering sacrifices to him, but also in feasting upon these sacrifices.

29. *And they provoked God to anger.* The prophet once more informs us, that they had been put upon their guard by another plague, in order that it might appear that God had always a strict regard for his own glory, in chastising the people; but as they were not bettered by these plagues, these chastisements were fruitless. Having formerly stated, that God's wrath had been appeased by the prayers of Moses, he now says, that the plague had been arrested or ceased by means of the kind interposition of Phinehas. Some render the word פלל, *pillel*, *to pray;* but the other rendering, to *execute justice*, is more in accordance with the context; namely, that by his zeal in executing justice upon the profligates, he turned away God's vengeance from the Israelites. *He stood up* therefore, that is, he rose up or interposed, when all others maintained

Baal-peor, by way of contempt, as if one should say their *blind god*, according to that in the psalm, 'They have eyes, and see not;' for the first letter, *caph*, signifies *as it were*, or *like*, and מוש, *musch*, *to grope*, or *feel about in manner of blind men*." *Moses and Aaron*, p. 170. This idol was also called *Baal-bereth*, (Judges viii. 33, and ix. 4,) from his worshippers binding themselves to him by covenant.

[1] "The dead" appears to be a term of contempt applied to idols. They are so called in opposition to the true and living God. There may also be an allusion to the fact, that many of the heathen idols were men who had been deified after their death.

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a careless indifference. As the Jews were sensible that it was by the kind intervention of one man that the plague was now healed, their obstinacy was the less excusable in not even then ceasing to sin. We must not forget that all these things are addressed to us. For when God from time to time chastises us, and calls upon us to repent by setting before us the example of others, how few profit by his corrections! Moreover, it deserves to be noticed, that the plague ceased at the very time when Phinehas executed justice. From this we may learn, that the most effectual way to quench the fire of God's anger, is when the sinner willingly sits in judgment upon himself for the punishment of his own transgressions; as Paul says, 1 Cor. xi. 31, "If we would judge ourselves, verily we would not be judged of the Lord." And surely God confers no small honour upon us, in placing the punishment of our sins within our reach. At the same time, it must be observed, that on that occasion the plague ceased in consequence of the punishment of a single person, because the people then shrunk from the abominable wickedness to which they had been addicted.

31. *And that deed was imputed.* The prophet, in thus praising one individual, heaps reproach upon the whole body of the people. For we infer from this token of approbation with which the Holy Spirit condescended to stamp the excellent action of Phinehas, how very base their conduct must have been. Neither was this honour reserved for him alone, but his posterity were to enjoy it throughout their succeeding generations. In order, therefore, to cast the greater reproach upon the people, Phinehas alone is contrasted with them. Some may be disposed to inquire, how the zeal of a single individual, overstepping the boundaries[1] of his calling, taking a sword and executing justice, could be approved of God? For it would seem, as if he had ventured upon this action without due consideration. I answer, that the saints have sometimes been under peculiar and extraordinary impulses, which ought not to be estimated by the ordinary standard of

[1] "Lequel outre les limites de sa vocation."—*Fr.*

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actions. When Moses slew the Egyptian, Exod. ii. 12, though not yet called by God to be the deliverer of Israel, and while he was not yet invested with the power of the sword, it is certain, that he was moved by the invisible and internal impulse of God to undertake that deed. Phinehas was moved by a similar impulse. No one indeed imagined that he was armed with the sword of God, yet he was conscious to himself of being moved by a heavenly influence in this matter. And hence it is to be observed, that the common mode and order of calling which God adopts, does not prevent him, whenever it seems proper, to stir up his elect by the secret influence of the Spirit to the performance of praiseworthy deeds.

But a more difficult question still remains, How that one action could be imputed to Phinehas for righteousness?[1] Paul proves that men are justified by faith alone, because it is written, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3. In Gen. xv. 6, Moses employs the same word. If the same thing may be said respecting works, the reasoning of Paul will be not only feeble, but frivolous. First of all, let us examine, whether or not Phinehas was justified on account of this deed alone. Verily the law, though it could justify, by no means promises salvation to any one work, but makes justification to consist in the perfect observance of all the commandments. It remains, therefore, that we affirm, that the work of Phinehas was imputed to him for righteousness, in the same way as God imputes the works of the faithful to them for righteousness, not in consequence of any intrinsic merit which they possess, but of his own free and unmerited grace. And as it

[1] "*And it was counted to him for righteousness.* Dr Hammond properly observes, that this expression signifies something more than *justifying*, as being the opposite of *condemning;* for thus it would denote no more than *acquitting* Phinehas, who had certainly committed no offence; on the contrary, by this act an offended God was satisfied. He gives to צדקה, therefore, the sense of *reward*, in which he is supported by the Chaldee, which has לזכו, *for merit.* Mendlessohn also, in his Beor to Gen. xv. 6, where this phrase occurs, assigns to צדקה the meaning of *merit* or *reward.* The reward in this case, we learn from the history, consisted in placing the priesthood in his family *for ever and ever*, as stated in the next portion of the verse.—See Num. xxv. 13."—*Phillips.*

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thus appears, that the perfect observance of the law alone (which is done no where) constitutes righteousness, all men must prostrate themselves with confusion of face before God's judgment-seat. Besides, were our works strictly examined, they would be found to be mingled with much imperfection. We have, therefore, no other source than to flee for refuge to the free unmerited mercy of God. And not only do we receive righteousness by grace through faith, but as the moon borrows her light from the sun, so does the same faith render our works righteous, because our corruptions being mortified, they are reckoned to us for righteousness. In short, faith alone, and not human merit, procures both for persons and for works the character of righteousness. I now return to Paul. And it is not from a single expression, that he argues that we are justified freely, and by faith only, but he assumes higher principles, to which I lately referred, that all men are destitute of righteousness, until God reconcile them to himself by the blood of Christ; and that faith is the means by which pardon and reconciliation are obtained, because justification by works is no where to be obtained. Hence he very properly concludes, that we are justified by faith alone. But righteousness by works is as it were subordinate (as they say) to the righteousness just mentioned, while works possess no value in themselves, excepting, and as far as, out of pure benevolence, God imputes them to us for righteousness.

32. *And they provoked him to anger at the waters of strife,*[1] *and it turned out ill to Moses on their account:*
33. *For they grieved his spirit,*[2] *so that he spake with his lips.*
34. *They did not destroy the nations whom Jehovah had commanded them:*
35. *But were mingled with*[3] *the heathen, and learned their works.*
36. *And served their idols: which were the occasion of their overthrow.*
37. *And sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils,*

[1] *At the waters of Meribah*, where "they strove with the Lord," Num. xx. 13.—See Ps. xcv. 8.

[2] "Ou, feirent rebeller."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, made his spirit to rebel."

[3] "'But were mingled among,' rather, 'But formed alliances with.'"—*Horsley.*

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38. *And they shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was defiled with blood.*
39. *And they were polluted with their own works, and went a whoring after their own inventions.*[1]

32. *And they provoked him.* The prophet mentions another offence of which they were guilty, in that they contended with God at the waters of strife, from which circumstance that place derived its name. The clamour was, it is true, raised directly against Moses, but if we examine the matter properly, we will find that they virtually murmured against God himself. And to point out the aggravation of their offence, he says that Moses was hardly dealt with on their account. From this it may be inferred that their transgression was very heinous, in that God did not spare even his own servant, whom he had chosen in preference to all others. We do not deny that Moses deserved that punishment; but if we search for the origin of the trespass, we will find that it was the sin of the people that was visited upon him. If Moses was prevented from entering the land of Canaan, because through the influence of the sin of others, and in opposition to the convictions of his own mind, he had been hurried on to the commission of iniquity, how much more inexcusable is the impiety of that people who deliberately strove with God, and by their folly and fretfulness, brought in Moses for a share of their guilt?

33. *For they grieved his spirit.* The verb מרה, *marah*, properly signifies *to vex* or *irritate*, but as it is here put in what the Hebrews call the Hiphil conjugation, some are of opinion that it is to be understood passively, to denote that it was the people who were the occasion of the rebellion; which interpretation does not appear to me to be very objectionable. I cannot, however, agree with those who would have the particle את, *eth*, to be a sign of what is denominated the dative case, as if Moses might be said to have rebelled against

[1] "——'And went a whoring with their own inventions;' rather,—'and play the wanton in their perverse habits.'"—*Horsley*.

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the Spirit of God. Had he done so, then assuredly the prophet would not have spoken so severely of the sin and folly into which he had inadvertently fallen. The meaning which I have already given answers very well, That the prime movers of the rebellion must have committed a very heinous offence, seeing that Moses, who had been pushed on by the impetuosity of the people to sin, was so severely dealt with by God. But while the prophet informs us that Moses was punished on the people's account, he is not to be understood as saying that he was altogether blameless. For even admitting that his spirit was ruffled in consequence of the tumult of the people, this ought to have made him the more careful to continue stedfast in his adherence to the Law of God. He adds, that *he spoke with his lips;* and this I take to refer to Moses, there being no ground for the conjecture that it refers to the punishment which God expressly denounced against Moses. It is more likely that these words were intended by the prophet to express how greatly the spirit of Moses was agitated when he openly murmured against God. The prophet, therefore, informs us that the submissive and gentle spirit of Moses was fanned, as it were, into a breeze by the perverseness of the people, so that even he spake unadvisedly, saying, "Can God give you water out of the rock?" (Num. xx. 10.) For such was the indignation which he felt burning within him, that he could not calmly wait for the commandment of God to smite the rock.

34. *They did not destroy the nations.* It appears to me that those persons are mistaken who think that the prophet is here simply giving a relation of the punishment which was inflicted upon the Jews, as if he were imputing to them the entire blame of not exterminating the nations, in consequence of their not deserving the honour of obtaining any more victories over them. But he rather prefers another charge against them, that they had been remiss in driving out the heathen, or more probably that they had not obeyed the Divine command to root them out of the land. Now that the cup of the iniquity of the Amorites was full, it was the purpose of God that they should be exterminated, lest their

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society might prove injurious to the holy people. For God, having chosen that land for a habitation to himself, intended that it should be holy and purified from all defilement. In refusing, therefore, to execute the vengeance enjoined upon them, the people showed their willingness to associate with the uncircumcised inhabitants of Canaan. In manifesting such indifference about God's command respecting the driving out these nations, they gave just cause for his anger waxing hot against them. Behold, saith he, I have commanded all these nations to be cut off by the sword; and now, because ye have not obeyed my voice, "they shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell," (Num. xxxiii. 55.) The not destroying all these nations, but permitting some of them to remain, might appear to be an act of mercy; but in thus acting, the people were guilty of neglecting to execute God's righteous vengeance upon them, and of leaving the land liable to be polluted with their abominations. From these things it ought to be noticed, that there are two extremes in which men are apt to indulge, either in being unnecessarily over rigorous, or in defeating the ends of justice by too great lenity. We must, therefore, adhere strictly to God's command, if we would desire to shun both extremes. For if the Israelites are condemned for sparing some of these nations wholly, what are we to think of those judges who, from a timid and apathetic attention to the responsible duties of their office, exercise too much lenity to a few persons, thus weakening the restraints of the inlets to vice, to the great detriment of the public weal?

35. *But were mingled.* He describes what was the result of this foolish humanity; namely, that they were defiled with the pollutions of the nations whom they had spared. Had they exclusively inhabited the land of Canaan, they would have more easily retained the pure worship of God. Allured by the influence of such neighbours, it is not wonderful that they soon degenerated from the footsteps of their fathers, for we are more inclined to follow the example of the bad than of the good. And now he speaks of the de-

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scendants of those who had so frequently provoked God's anger in the wilderness, and declares, that as the same unbelief, rebellion, and ingratitude, were rampant in the succeeding race, they were no better than their fathers.

In mingling with the heathens they openly rejected the distinguishing loving-kindness of God, who adopted them as his children, under the express condition that they should be separated from these profane nations. Therefore, in associating with them indiscriminately, they render this holy covenant of no effect. When he adds, *that they learned their works*, he warns us, that nothing is more dangerous than associating with the ungodly; because, being more prone to follow vice than virtue, it cannot but be, that the more conversant we are with corruption, the more widely will it spread. In such circumstances, the utmost care and caution are requisite, lest the wicked, with whom we come into contact, infect us by their vitiated morals; and particularly where there is danger of relapsing into idolatry, to which we are all naturally prone. What, then, will be the effect produced upon us when instigated by others to commit sin, but to add sin to sin?[1] The prophet, therefore, declares that the Jews were already so much under the tuition of the heathen as to abandon themselves to the practice of their idolatrous rites. In employing the word *to serve*, he confutes the contemptible evasion of the Papists, who pretend that they do not give to images the worship that is due to God alone, but only a sort of honorary adoration.[2] But if the worshipping of images be lawful, the prophet had no sufficient cause to condemn his own nation for serving strange gods. Despicable, therefore, is the distinction, that Divine homage is to be paid to God alone, and that a kind of honorary adoration is to be given to images. He adds, that this *issued in their overthrow*, in order that their obstinate attachment to their follies,

[1] "Quid igitur fiet ubi oleum camino addet aliena instigatio?"—*Lat.* "Que sera-ce donc quand l'instigation d'autruy iettera (comme l'on dit) de l'huile dedans le feu?"—*Fr.*

[2] "Dum adoratione duliæ, non latriæ, se imagines colere excusant."—*Lat.*—See vol. ii. p. 272, note.

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and their despising the chastisements of God, may more palpably appear.

37. *And they sacrificed.* The prophet here mentions one species of superstition which demonstrates the awful blindness of the people; their not hesitating to sacrifice their sons and daughters to devils.[1] In applying such an abominable designation to the sin of the people, he means to exhibit it in more hateful colours. From this we learn that inconsiderate zeal is a flimsy pretext in favour of any act of devotion. For by how much the Jews were under the influence of burning zeal, by so much does the prophet convict them with being guilty of greater wickedness; because their madness carried them away to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that they did not spare even their own offspring. Were good intentions meritorious, as idolaters suppose, then indeed the laying aside of all natural affection in sacrificing their own children was a deed deserving of the highest praise. But when men act under the impulse of their own capricious humour, the more they occupy themselves with acts of external worship, the more do they increase their guilt. For what difference was there between Abraham and those persons of

[1] "לשדים, *to the devils.* This word is found only here and in Deut. xxxii. 17, 'They sacrificed unto *devils*, not to God,' &c. Some persons derive it from שוד, *to lay waste.* Michaelis, from an Arabic word, signifying *to be black.* Hengstenberg, from an Arabic word, signifying *to exercise lordship.* Whatever root may be the true one, there is no doubt that שדים denotes false gods of some kind or another to which human sacrifices were offered."—*Phillips.* That the Canaanites, and their descendants, the Carthaginians, as well as other heathen nations, sacrificed men, and even their dearest children, to appease their deities, is a fact established not only from the Sacred Writings, but also from profane history; and strange as it may seem, it is no less certain, that in this they were imitated by the Israelites, who offered their sons and daughters to the same false gods. Compare 2 Kings xvi. 3; xvii. 17; xxi. 6; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; xxxiii. 6. They had been expressly warned against this horrid practice, (Lev. xviii. 21; xx. 3; Deut. xii. 31; xviii. 10;) but so infatuated were they, and such is the desperate wickedness of the human heart and the power of Satan over men, that they frequently relapsed into it. Dr Adam Clarke translates the original word which Calvin renders *devils* by *demons.* "*Devil,*" says he, "is never in Scripture used in the plural; there is but ONE *devil,* though there are MANY demons."

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whom the prophet makes mention, but that the former, under the influence of faith, was ready to offer up his son, while the latter, carried away by the impulse of intemperate zeal, cast off all natural affection, and imbrued their hands in the blood of their own offspring.

38. *And they shed.* He inveighs with still greater indignation against that religious phrensy which led them to sacrifice their own children, and thus to pollute the land by the shedding of innocent blood. Should any one object that Abraham is praised, because he did not withhold his only son, the answer is plain, That he did it in obedience to God's command, so that every vestige of inhumanity was effaced by means of the purity of faith. For if obedience is better than sacrifice, (1 Sam. xv. 22,) it is the best rule both for morality and religion. It is an awful manifestation of God's vindictive wrath, when the superstitious heathens, left to their own inventions, become hardened in deeds of horrid cruelty. As often as the martyrs put their life in jeopardy in defence of the truth, the incense of such a sacrifice is pleasing to God. But when the two Romans, by name Decii,[1] in an execrable manner devoted themselves unto death, that was an act of atrocious impiety. It is not without just cause, therefore, that the prophet enhances the guilt of the people by this consideration, that to the perverse mode of worshipping God, they had added excessive cruelty. Nor is there less cause for charging them with having polluted that land out of which God had commanded them to expel the ancient inhabitants, in order that he might render it the peculiar scene where he was to be worshipped. The Israelites then were doubly wicked, who, by not only defiling the land with their idolatry, but also by cruelly butchering their children, robbed God of his due, and in a manner frustrated his designs.

39. *And they were polluted with their own works.* He now concludes by stating generally, that the Jews, in adopting the

[1] "Mais quand les deux Romains nommez Decii."—*Fr.*

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abominable practices of the heathen, were become wholly filthy; because in all the devices of men there is nothing else than impurity. He denominates as the *works of men* all the false worship which they devise without the Divine sanction; as if he should say, that the holiness, which is truly connected with the worship of God, comes from his word, and that all human inventions and admixtures in religion are profane, and tend to corrupt the service of God. Doubtless it was the intention of the Israelites to serve God, but the Holy Spirit declares that all the fruit of their burning zeal was their becoming more abominable in God's sight by their lewd inventions. For a strict adherence to the word of God constitutes spiritual chastity.

40. *And the wrath of Jehovah waxed hot against his people, and he abhorred his own inheritance:*
41. *And he delivered them into the hands of the heathen; and their enemies ruled over them.*
42. *And their adversaries subdued them, and they were afflicted under their hand.*
43. *Many times he delivered them; and they provoked him with their counsel, and were oppressed by their iniquity.*
44. *And he saw when they were in straits, in that he heard their cry:*
45. *And he remembered his covenant towards them, and it repented him according to the greatness of his mercies.*
46. *And he made them to find pity from those who had carried them away captive.*

40. *And the wrath of Jehovah waxed hot.* The severity of the punishment inflicted upon the people confirms the truth of what we formerly said, that they had been guilty of no trivial offence, in presuming to corrupt the worship of God. And they themselves showed how hopeless their reformation was, in that all this as yet failed to bring them truly to repent of their sin. That the people, who were God's sacred and chosen heritage, were delivered up to the abominations of the heathen, who themselves were the slaves of the devil, was an awful manifestation of his vindictive wrath. Then, at least, ought they to have held in abhorrence their own

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wickedness, by which they had been precipitated into such direful calamities. In saying, *that they were subdued and afflicted by their enemies*, the prophet points out, in a still more astonishing manner, the baseness of their conduct. Reduced to a state of bondage and oppression, their folly appears the more disgraceful, in that they were not truly and heartily humbled under God's almighty hand. For prior to this, they had been warned by Moses, that they had not casually fallen into that bondage so galling to them, neither had it happened by the valour of their enemies, but because they were given over, and, as it were, sold to it by God himself. That those who had refused to bear his yoke, should be delivered up to tyrants to harass and oppress them, and that those who would not endure to be ruled by God's paternal sway, should be subdued by their enemies, to be trodden under their feet, is a striking example of God's retributive justice.

43. *Many times.* As the wicked perversity of the people was manifested in that God's severe chastisements failed to produce their reformation, so now, on the other hand, the prophet deduces the detestable hardness of their hearts from the fact, that all the benefits which they had received from God could not bend them into obedience. They did, indeed, in the time of their afflictions, groan under the burden of them; but when God not only mitigated their punishment, but also granted them wonderful deliverances, can their subsequent backsliding be excused? It becomes us to bear in mind, that here, as in a glass, we have a picture of the nature of all mankind; for let God but adopt those very means which he employed in relation to the Israelites, in order to reclaim the majority of the sons of men, how comparatively few are there who will not be found continuing in the very same state as they were? And if he either humble us by the severity of his rod, or melt us by his kindness, the effect is only temporary; because, though he visit us with correction upon correction, and heap kindness upon kindness, yet we very soon relapse into our wonted vicious practices. As for the Jews, their insensate stupidity was insufferable, in that, notwithstanding the many and magnificent deliverances

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which God wrought out for them, they did not cease from their backslidings. For the Psalmist says, that they, *nevertheless, provoked God with their wicked inventions.* Then he declares that they received a just recompense of reward in being oppressed by their iniquity. Moreover, he informs us, that though they were most deserving of all their afflictions, yet their groanings were heard; whence we learn, that God, in his unwearied kindness, did not cease to strive with them on account of their perverseness of spirit.

For what pity was this, to hear the cry of those who turned a deaf ear to his wise instructions, and were regardless of all his warnings and threatenings? And yet after all this forbearance and long-suffering, their exceedingly depraved hearts remained unchanged.

45. *And he remembered.* God's being mindful of his covenant is here assigned as the cause of his great mercy and long-suffering. In that covenant, he not only declares that there is a gracious pardon for transgressions, but he also adverts to the perverse blindness of those who were not brought back by such remedies to the covenant, in which they were well aware that their safety was placed. But above all, he charges them with ingratitude; because, when deserving to perish, they did not acknowledge that they were indebted to the mercy of God alone for their preservation. This observation is strengthened by the next clause of the verse, in which he says that God had spared them *according to the greatness of his mercies.* For the greatness of the punishment which their sins deserved, may be inferred from the great treasures of his loving-kindness, which God had to open in order to procure their redemption. The word *to repent* expresses no change in God, but only in the mode of administering his corrections. It may seem as if God altered his purpose, when he mitigates punishment, or withdraws his hand from executing his judgments. The Scripture, however, accommodating itself to our weak and limited capacity, speaks only after the manner of men.

46. *And he made them to find pity.* As he had above said,

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that the Jews had been delivered into the hands of their enemies, because God's anger was, as it were, arms to their adversaries to subdue them; so now he says, that the same God had softened the hearts of these very enemies, who, by terrible means, and with great cruelty, had executed his vengeance upon them. As, then, the hearts of all men are entirely under God's control, to harden or to soften them according to his sovereign pleasure, so, while his anger was kindled against his people, their enemies were at the same time also inflamed with implacable resentment towards them. But the moment his anger was appeased, the fire which issued from the furnace of his judgment was extinguished, and the cruelty of their enemies was changed into mercy. And that enemies, cruel and barbarous, should begin to love and pity those whom they formerly hated, was a change so astonishing as to be incredible, had they not, in the kind providence of God, from wolves been transformed into lambs.

47. *Save us, O Jehovah our God! and gather us from among the heathen, to praise thy holy name, and to glory in thy praise.*
48. *Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, for ever and ever; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye Jehovah.*[1]

47. *Save us, Jehovah our God!* From the conclusion of the psalm, it is evident, that it was composed during the sad and calamitous dispersion of the people. And although subsequent to the times of Haggai and Malachi, no famous prophets appeared among the people, it is nevertheless probable that some of the priests were endued with the spirit of prophecy, in order that they might direct them to the source whence they might receive all needful consolation. It is my opinion, that after they were dispersed by the tyranny of

[1] The Hebrew for "Praise ye Jehovah," is הללויה, *Haleluyah*,—a word which occurs very frequently at the beginning and end of psalms. The LXX., leaving it untranslated, have Αλληλουϊα. From this solemn form of praise to God, which no doubt was far more ancient than the time of David, the ancient Greeks plainly had their similar acclamation, Ελελευ Ιη, with which they both began and ended their poems or hymns in honour of Apollo.—See *Parkhurst's Lexicon on* הלל, iv. With this psalm is concluded the fourth of the books into which the Psalms have been divided by the Jews.

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Antiochus, this form of prayer was adapted to the exigency of their existing circumstances, in which the people, by reflecting upon their former history, might acknowledge that their fathers had, in ways innumerable, provoked God to wrath, since the time he had delivered them. For it was needful for them to be completely humbled, to prevent them from murmuring against God's dispensations. And seeing that God had extended pardon to their fathers though undeserving of it, that was calculated to inspire them hereafter with the hope of forgiveness, provided they carefully and cordially sought to be reconciled to him; and especially is this the case, because there is here a solemn remembrance of the covenant, through the faith of which they might draw near to God, though his anger was not yet turned away. Besides, as God had chosen them to be his peculiar people, they call upon him to collect into one body the dissevered and bleeding members, according to the prediction of Moses, "If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee," (Deut. xxx. 4.) This prediction was at length accomplished, when the widely separated multitude were gathered together, and grew up in the unity of the faith. For although that people never regained their earthly kingdom and polity, yet their being grafted into the body of Christ, was a more preferable gathering together. Wherever they were, they were united to each other, and also to the Gentile converts, by the holy and spiritual bond of faith, so that they constituted but one Church, extending itself over the whole earth. They subjoin the end contemplated by their redemption from captivity, namely, that they *might celebrate the name of God*, and employ themselves continually in his praises.

48. *Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel.* The prophet here regulates the prayers and desires of the people in such a way, as that, amid their grievous oppression, the dejected captives may not cease to render thanks to God; and this is a matter which must be carefully attended to, because, when borne down by adversity, there is scarcely one among a

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hundred, who, with composure of spirit, draws near to God; but, on the contrary, he betrays the pride of his heart by the careless and insipid manner in which he prays, or in pouring out complaints about his afflicted condition. But the only way in which we can expect God to lend a favourable ear to the voice of our supplications is, in the spirit of meekness to submit to his corrections, and patiently to bear the cross which he is pleased to lay upon us. It is with great propriety then, that the prophet exhorts the afflicted captives to bless God, even when he was chastising them with considerable severity. It is to the same purpose that it is added, *let the people say, Amen;* as if he were commanding them all to consent to the praises of God, though both privately and publicly they were overwhelmed in a sea of troubles.

PSALM CVII.

The Psalmist teaches us, in the first place, that human affairs are not regulated by the fickle and uncertain wheel of fortune, but that we must observe the judgments of God in the different vicissitudes which occur in the world, and which men imagine happen by chance. Consequently, adversity and all the ills which mankind endure, as shipwrecks, famines, banishments, diseases, and disasters in war, are to be regarded as so many tokens of God's displeasure, by which he summons them, on account of their sins, before his judicial throne. But prosperity, and the happy issue of events, ought also to be attributed to his grace, in order that he may always receive the praise which he deserves, that of being a merciful Father, and an impartial Judge. About the close of the psalm, he inveighs against those ungodly men who will not acknowledge God's hand, amid such palpable demonstrations of his providence.[1]

[1] "The author of this psalm is not known; but it was probably David, although some think it better to consider it as having been written after the return from the Babylonish captivity. This psalm is of very singular construction, and was obviously intended to be sung in responses. It has a frequently recurring double burden or intercalary verse. The first burden is found in verses 6, 13, 19, 28; the second 8, 15, 21, 31; that is, after the description of a class of calamities comes the first chorus ex-

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1. *Praise Jehovah, because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.*
2. *Let the redeemed of Jehovah say this,*[1] *whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the afflicter.*[2]
3. *Whom he hath gathered out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.*[3]

pressing the cry to the Lord for deliverance; then a single verse describes the deliverance as granted, after which follows the chorus of thanksgiving —and thus on to verse 35, where the system ends. The last two burdens are, however, separate by two verses instead of one, as before. It will also be observed, that the second chorus has sometimes annexed another reflective distich, illustrative of the sentiment, as in verses 9, 16. There are many other examples of a similar arrangement to be found in the Psalms; but in Lowth's opinion, few of them are equal, and none superior, to this."—*Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.* The beauties of this very interesting and highly instructive composition are many and striking, of which the least intelligent reader who peruses it with any degree of attention must be convinced. In point of poetical beauty, it may, according to the best judges, be classed with the most admired productions of Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, or Virgil. "It may undoubtedly be enumerated," remarks Lowth, "among the most elegant monuments of antiquity; and it is chiefly indebted for its elegance to the general plan and conduct of the poem. It celebrates the goodness and mercy of God towards mankind, as demonstrated in the immediate assistance and comfort which he affords, in the greatest calamities, to those who devoutly implore his aid: in the first place, to those who wander in the desert, and who encounter the horrors of famine; next, to those who are in bondage; again, to those who are afflicted with disease; and, finally, to those who are tossed about upon the ocean. The prolixity of the argument is occasionally relieved by narration; and examples are superadded of the divine severity in punishing the wicked, as well as of his benignity to the devout and virtuous."—*Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, vol. ii. p. 376. "Had such an Idyl," says Dr Adam Clarke, "appeared in Theocritus or Virgil, or had it been found as a scene in any of the Greek Tragedies, even in Æschylus himself, it would have been praised up to the heavens, and probably been produced as their masterpiece."

[1] "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say*, viz., what is said in the latter part of the preceding verse, *that his mercy endureth for ever.*—See Ps. cxviii. 1, and following verses."—*Phillips.*

[2] "מיד־צר, *from the hand* or *power of the enemy.* Luther has translated it, *aus Noth, from want;* in which translation he is followed by Hengstenberg, who observes, that צר, *want*, 'is here personified, and is represented as a dangerous enemy, who has Israel in his hand. In the whole psalm the discourse is not concerning enemies, but only concerning want or misery.'—See verses 6, 13. He is probably right, for it is doubtful whether צר ever signifies an enemy, except, perhaps, in a few passages in the latter books of the Bible."—*Phillips.*

[3] The original word is ומים, "and from the sea;" to which agree all the ancient versions, and the Chaldee interprets it of the Southern Sea. ים is often put for the Mediterranean Sea; which being west of Judea, this word came to signify generally the west, when employed to express one of the cardinal points, Gen. xii. 8; Exod. x. 19. But it is also used

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4. *They wandered from the way in the solitary desert ;*[1] *they did not find a city of habitation.*
5. *Both hungry and thirsty, so that their soul fainted within them.*
6. *In their straits they called upon Jehovah, and he delivered them from all their afflictions.*
7. *And he directed them by a right way, that they might come to a city of habitation.*
8. *Let them praise the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his marvellous works in the presence of the sons of men.*
9. *Because he hath satisfied the longing soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with goodness.*

1. *Praise Jehovah.* We have already explained this verse, for it formed the commencement of the preceding psalm. And it appears that it was not only frequently used among the Jews, but also so incorporated with other psalms, that when one part of the chorus on the one side was singing a portion of the psalm, the other part of the chorus on the opposite side in its turn, after each succeeding verse, responded, *Praise Jehovah, because he is good, &c.* The penman of this psalm, whoever he was, has, instead of the ordinary preface, inserted this beautiful sentiment, in which praise and thanksgiving to God were so frequently expressed by the Israelitish Church. Immediately he proceeds to speak more particularly. And first, he exhorts those to offer up a tribute of gratitude to God; who, after having been delivered from slavery and imprisonment, and after a long and painful journey, arrived in safety at their place of abode. These he calls *the redeemed of God;* because, in wandering through the trackless desert, and howling wilderness, they many a time would have been prevented from returning home, had not God, as it were, with his outstretched hand, appeared as their guard and their guide. He

for *the Red Sea*, as in Ps. cxiv. 3, where ים is put absolutely for סוף ים, which lay to the south of Judea, and hence the word might denote the south point. Hare, Secker, Kennicott, and Horsley, would read מימין, "from the south." Gesenius and Hengstenberg are of opinion, apparently without sufficient reason, that ים, both in this passage and in Isa. xlix. 12, where it is also joined with צפון, *the north*, has the signification of *west*.

[1] "Ou, Ils se sont fourvoyez au desert tous seulets."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, they wandered solitary in the desert."

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does not here refer to travellers indiscriminately, but to such as either by hostile power, or by any other kind of violence, or by stern necessity, having been banished to distant regions, felt themselves to be in the midst of imminent dangers; or it may be, that he refers to those who had been made prisoners by enemies, pirates, or other robbers. He reminds them that it was by no casual occurrence that they had been driven about in that manner, and had been brought back to their native country, but that all their wanderings had been under the superintending providence of God.

But the second verse might be conjoined with the first, as if the prophet were commanding the persons whom he was addressing to sing this celebrated ode. It may with equal propriety be read by itself thus: Let the redeemed of Jehovah, who have returned from captivity to their own land, come forth now, and take part in the celebration of God's praises, and let them publish his loving-kindness which they have experienced in their deliverance. Among the Jews, who had occasion to undertake extensive journies, such occurrences as these were very common; because they could hardly leave their own land, without from all quarters encountering ways rugged, and difficult, and perilous; and the same observation is equally applicable to mankind in general. He reminds them how often they wandered and turned aside from the right way, and found no place of shelter; a thing by no means rare in these lonely deserts. Were a person to enter a forest without any knowledge of the proper direction, he would, in the course of his wandering, be in danger of becoming the prey of lions and wolves. He has, however, particularly in his eye those who, finding themselves unexpectedly in desert places, are also in danger of perishing for hunger and thirst. For it is certain that such persons are hourly in hazard of death, unless the Lord come to their rescue.

6. *In their straits they called upon Jehovah.* The verbs are here in the past tense, and according to grammarians, represent a continued action. The meaning therefore is, that those who are wandering in desert places are often pinched with hunger and thirst in consequence of finding no place in

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which to lodge; and who, when all hope of deliverance fails them, then cry unto God. Doubtless, God grants deliverance to many when in straits, even though they do not present their supplications to Him for aid; and hence it was not so much the design of the prophet in this passage to extol the faith of the pious, who call upon God with all their heart, as to describe the common feelings of humanity. There may be not a few whose hope does not centre on God, who, nevertheless, are constrained, by some invisible disposition of mind, to come to Him, when under the pressure of dire necessity. And this is the plan which God sometimes pursues, in order to extort from such persons the acknowledgment that deliverance is to be sought for from no other quarter than from Himself alone; and even the ungodly, who, while living voluptuously, scoff at Him, he constrains, in spite of themselves, to invoke his name. It has been customary in all ages for heathens, who look upon religion as a fable, when compelled by stern necessity, to call upon God for help. Did they do so in jest? By no means; it was by a secret natural instinct that they were led to reverence God's name, which formerly they held in derision. The Spirit of God, therefore, in my opinion, here narrates what frequently takes place, namely, that persons destitute of piety and faith, and who have no desire to have any thing to do with God, if placed in perilous circumstances, are constrained by natural instinct, and without any proper conception of what they are doing, to call on the name of God. Since it is only in dubious and desperate cases that they betake themselves to God, this acknowledgment which they make of their helplessness is a palpable proof of their stupidity, that in the season of peace and tranquillity they neglect him, so much are they then under the intoxicating influence of their own prosperity; and notwithstanding that the germ of piety is planted in their hearts, they nevertheless never dream of learning wisdom, unless when driven by the dint of adversity; I mean, to learn the wisdom of acknowledging that there is a God in heaven who directs every event. It is unnecessary to allude here to the sarcastic retort of the ancient buffoon, who, on entering a temple, and beholding a number of tablets which several

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merchants had suspended there as memorials of their having escaped shipwreck, through the kind interposition of the gods, smartly and facetiously remarked, "But the deaths of those who have been drowned are not enumerated, the number of which is innumerable." Perhaps he might have some just cause for scoffing in this manner at such idols. But even if a hundredfold more were drowned in the sea than safely reach the harbour, this does not in the least degree detract from the glory of the goodness of God, who, while he is merciful, is at the same time also just, so that the dispensing of the one does not interfere with the exercise of the other. The same observation applies to travellers that stray from the path, and wander up and down in the desert. If many of them perish for hunger and thirst, if many are devoured by wild animals, if many die from cold, these are nothing else than so many tokens of the judgments of God, which he designs for our consideration. From which we infer that the same thing would happen to all men, were it not the will of God to save a portion of them; and thus interposing as a judge between them, he preserves some for the sake of showing his mercy, and pours out his judgments upon others to declare his justice. The prophet, therefore, very properly adds, that by the hand of God they were led into the *right way, where they may find a suitable place for lodging;* and consequently he exhorts them to render thanks to God for this manifestation of his goodness. And with the view of enhancing the loving-kindness of God, he connects *his wondrous works* with his mercy; as if he should say, In this kind interposition, God's grace is too manifest, either to be unperceived or unacknowledged by all; and for those who have been the subjects of such a remarkable deliverance, to remain silent regarding it, would be nothing less than an impious attempt to suppress the wonderful doings of God, an attempt equally vain with that of endeavouring to trample under their feet the light of the sun. For what else can be said of us, seeing that our natural instinct drives us to God for help, when we are in perplexity and peril; and when, after being rescued, we forthwith forget him, who will deny that his glory is, as it were, obscured by our wickedness and ingratitude?

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10. *They who dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in trouble and iron;*
11. *Because they rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High:*
12. *When he humbled their heart with affliction; they were brought low, and there was none to help them.*
13. *In their affliction they cried to Jehovah, and he delivered them from their tribulations.*
14. *He rescued them from darkness and from the shadow of death, and broke off their chains.*
15. *Let them praise the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his marvellous works in the presence of the sons of men.*
16. *Because he hath broken the brazen gates, and dashed in pieces the iron bars.*[1]

10. *They who dwell in darkness.* The Spirit of God makes mention here of another species of danger in which God manifestly discovers his power and grace in the protecting and delivering of men. The world, as I said, calls these vicissitudes the sport of fortune: and hardly one among a hundred can be found who ascribes them to the superintending providence of God. It is a very different kind of practical

[1] To secure the gates of cities, it is customary in the East, at the present day, to cover them with thick plates of brass and iron. Maundrell speaks of the enormous gates of the principal mosque at Damascus, formerly the Church of St John the Baptist, being plated over with brass. Pitts informs us, that Algiers has five gates, and some of these have two, some three, other gates within them; and that some of them are plated all over with thick iron, being made strong and convenient for what it is —a nest of pirates.—*Harmer's Observations*, vol. i. p. 329. To such a practice, which, in all probability, obtained in ancient times, there seems to be here a reference. From this verse some have been inclined to think that the psalm was written after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. This deliverance was predicted, in precisely the same terms, in that remarkable passage, where God promises to go before Cyrus his anointed, and "break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron," (Isaiah xlv. 2.) This phraseology appropriately expresses the superior and almost impregnable strength of Babylon. "Abydenus, quoted by Eusebius in his *Præparatio Evangelica*, says that the wall of Babylon had brazen gates. And Herodotus more particularly,—'In the wall all around there are a hundred gates all of brass; and so, in like manner, are the sides and the lintels.' The gates likewise within the city, opening to the river from the several streets, were of brass: as were those also of the Temple of Belus."—(*Lowth on Isaiah* xlv. 2.) But still these brazen gates could not secure the city and the empire from falling into the hands of the instrument chosen by God for the deliverance of his people.

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wisdom which God expects at our hands; namely, that we ought to meditate on his judgments in the time of adversity, and on his goodness in delivering us from it. For surely it is not by mere chance that a person falls into the hands of enemies or robbers; neither is it by chance that he is rescued from them. But this is what we must constantly keep in view, that all afflictions are God's rod, and that therefore there is no remedy for them elsewhere than in his grace. If a person fall into the hands of robbers or pirates, and be not instantly murdered, but, giving up all hope of life, expects death every moment; surely the deliverance of such a one is a striking proof of the grace of God, which shines the more illustriously in proportion to the fewness of the number who make their escape. Thus, then, should a great number perish, this circumstance ought by no means to diminish the praises of God. On this account the prophet charges all those with ingratitude, who, after they have been wonderfully preserved, very soon lose sight of the deliverance thus vouchsafed to them. And, to strengthen the charge, he brings forward, as a testimony against them, their sighs and cries. For when they are in straits, they confess in good earnest that God is their deliverer; how happens it, then, that this confession disappears when they are enjoying peace and quietness?

11. *Because they rebelled.* In assigning the cause of their afflictions he corrects the false impressions of those persons who imagine that these happen by chance. Were they to reflect on the judgments of God, they would at once perceive that there was nothing like chance or fortune in the government of the world. Moreover, until men are persuaded that all their troubles come upon them by the appointment of God, it will never come into their minds to supplicate him for deliverance. Farther, when the prophet assigns the reason for their afflictions, he is not to be regarded as speaking of those persons as if they were notoriously wicked, but he is to be considered as calling upon the afflicted carefully to examine some particular parts of their life, and although no one accuse them, to look into their hearts, where

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they will always discover the true origin of all the miseries which overtake them. Nor does he only charge them with having merely sinned, but with having rebelled against the word of God, thus intimating that the best and only regulation for our lives consists in yielding a prompt obedience to his commandments. When, therefore, sheer necessity compels those who are in this manner convicted to cry unto God, they must be insensate indeed, if they do not acknowledge that the deliverance which, contrary to their expectation, they receive, comes immediately from God. For brazen gates and iron bars are spoken of for the purpose of enhancing the benefit; as if he said, the chains of perpetual slavery have been broken asunder.

17. *Fools are afflicted on account of the way of their transgression, and by reason of their iniquities.*
18. *Their soul loatheth all food ;*[1] *and they approach the gates of death.*
19. *Then they cry unto Jehovah in their tribulation ; he saves them from their straits.*
20. *He sendeth his word, and healeth them, and rescues them from all their corruptions.*[2]
21. *Let them praise the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his marvellous works in the presence of the sons of men.*
22. *And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of praise, and declare his works with rejoicings.*

17. *Fools are afflicted on account of the way of their transgression.* He comes to another species of chastisement. For as he observed above, that those were given over to captivity who refused to yield obedience to God, so now he teaches that others have been visited by God with disease, as the fruit of their transgressions. And when the transgressor shall find that it is God who is administering correction to him, this will pave the way for his arriving at the knowledge of his grace.

He denominates those *fools*, who, thoughtlessly giving themselves up to sensuality, bring destruction upon them-

[1] "The Psalmist is speaking of sick men, to whom the most desirable food is often abhorrent."—*Phillips.*

[2] "Ou, fosses, ou pieges."—*Fr. marg.* "Pitfalls, or snares."

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selves. The sin which they commit is not the result of ignorance and error only, but of their carnal affections, which depriving them of proper understanding, cause them to devise things detrimental to themselves. The maxim, that the fear of God is wisdom, must never be lost sight of. Hence it plainly follows, that they who shake off the yoke of God, and surrender themselves to Satan and sin, are the victims of their own folly and fury. And as constituting a principal ingredient of this madness, the prophet employs the term *defection* or *transgression;* and subsequently he adds *iniquities;* because it happens that when once a man departs from God, from that moment he loses all self-control, and falls from one sin into another. But it is not of the distempers which commonly prevail in the world to which a reference is made in this passage, but to those which are deemed fatal, and in which all hope of life is abandoned, so that the grace of God becomes the more conspicuous when deliverance from them is obtained. When a man recovers from a slight indisposition, he does not so plainly discern the effects of God's power, as when it is put forth in a wonderful and notable manner to bring back some from the gates of death, and restores them to their wonted health and vigour. He says, therefore, that they are preserved from many *corruptions*, which is equivalent to his saying, that they are delivered from as many deaths. To this purport are the following words of the prophet, in which he says, *that they approach the gates of death, and that they loathe all food.* We have already adverted to their calling upon God, namely, that when men are reduced to the greatest straits, they, by thus calling upon God for aid, acknowledge that they would be undone unless he wonderfully interposed for their deliverance.

20. *He sendeth his word.* Again, in saying that they are delivered from destruction, the prophet shows that he is here alluding to those diseases which, in the opinion of men, are incurable, and from which few are delivered. Besides, he contrasts God's assistance with all the remedies which are in the power of man to apply; as if he should say, that their disease having baffled the skill of earthly physicians, their recovery has been

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entirely owing to the exertion of God's power. It is proper also to notice the manner in which their recovery is effected; God has but to will it, or to speak the word, and instantly all diseases, and even death itself, are expelled. I do not regard this as exclusively referring to the faithful, as many expositors do. I own, indeed, that it is of comparatively little consequence to us to be the subjects of bodily care, if our souls still remain unsanctified by the word of God; and hence it is the intention of the prophet that we consider the mercy of God as extending to the evil and unthankful. The meaning of the passage, therefore, is, that diseases neither come upon us by chance, nor are to be ascribed to natural causes alone, but are to be viewed as God's messengers executing his commands; so that we must believe that the same person that sent them can easily remove them, and for this purpose he has only to speak the word. And since we now perceive the drift of the passage, we ought to attend to the very appropriate analogy contained in it. Corporeal maladies are not removed except by the word or command of God, much less are men's souls restored to the enjoyment of spiritual life, except this word be apprehended by faith.

And let them sacrifice. This clause is subjoined by way of explanation, the more strongly to express how God is robbed of his due, if in the matter of sacrifice his providence be not recognized. Even nature itself teaches that some kind of homage and reverence is due to God; this is acknowledged by the heathens themselves, who have no other instructor than nature. We know too, that the practice of offering sacrifices has obtained among all nations; and doubtless it was by the observance of this ritual, that God designed to preserve in the human family some sense of piety and religion. To acknowledge the bounty and beneficence of God, is the most acceptable sacrifice which can be presented to him; to this subject, therefore, the prophet intends to recall the attention of the insensate and indifferent portion of men. I do not deny that there may be also an allusion to the ceremonial law; but inasmuch as in the world at large sacrifices formed part of the religious exercises, he charges those with ingratitude, who, after having escaped from some

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imminent peril, forget to celebrate the praises of their Great Deliverer.

23. *They*[1] *that go down to the sea in ships, trading in the great waters,*
24. *See the works of Jehovah, his wonders in the deep.*
25. *He speaks, and raiseth the stormy wind, and causeth the billows thereof to mount on high.*
26. *They mount up to the heavens, they descend into the deeps; their soul breaketh because of trouble.*
27. *They are tossed and totter like a drunken man, and all their senses are overwhelmed.*[2]
28. *And they cry to Jehovah in their straits,*[3] *and he rescues them from their troubles.*
29. *He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.*
30. *And they rejoice because they are calmed; and he brings them to the coast which they desired.*
31. *Let them celebrate the mercy of Jehovah in his presence, and his wonders among the sons of men;*
32. *And let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*[4]

[1] This psalm is distinguished for beautiful and inimitable description. In the preceding part of it, the weary and bewildered traveller,—the forlorn and wretched captive, shut up in the dungeon and bound in fetters,—the sick and dying man,—are painted in the most striking and affecting manner. In this verse there is a transition to ships, and the dangers of mariners foundering in a storm, which is continued to the close of the 30th verse. This has often been admired as one of the sublimest descriptions of a sea-storm anywhere to be found, either in the Sacred Writings, or in profane authors.

[2] Horsley reads, "And all their skill is drowned;" "that is," says he, "their skill in the art of navigation is drowned; a metaphor taken from the particular danger which threatens them." Phillips reads, *And all their wisdom is absorbed* or *swallowed up;* which, in like manner, he explains as denoting that "their alarm is so great, that their knowledge deserts them; they lose all self-possession, and become entirely unfit for managing the ship."

[3] Instead of *in their straits*, Phillips reads, *from their prison-houses, places of confinement.* "By their prison-houses," says he, "we understand the ship in which they were confined; to be liberated from which, and consequently from the risk of a watery grave, they cried unto the Lord."

[4] "עם, *the people*, is here evidently opposed to זקנים, *elders*, and both signify the whole assembly or congregation. For, among the Jews, the doctors, rulers of the synagogue, and *elders*, had a distinct apartment

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23. *They that go down to the sea in ships.* Here we have another instance of God's superintending care towards mankind pointed out to us by the prophet, exemplified in the bringing of those who are shipwrecked to the harbour, and this, too, as if he had raised them from the depth and darkness of the tomb, and brought them to live in the light of day. I do not understand what is here said about those who are accustomed to navigate the ocean *seeing the wonders of God*, as referring generally to the many wonderful things with which it abounds. Such persons are well fitted to bear testimony regarding the works of God, because they there behold more vast and various wonders than are to be seen upon earth. But it appears to me preferable to connect this with the subsequent context, where the prophet is his own interpreter, and where he shows how suddenly God raises and calms the tempest.

The sum of the matter is, that the scope of the passage is to point out that the lives of those who navigate the seas are often in great jeopardy by the storms which they encounter; because, as often as the ocean heaves and is agitated, and the billows rise and rage, so often does death stare them in the face. But he furnishes us with a still more vivid picture of the providence of God; for in telling us, that the sea does not of its own accord rise into a tempest, he makes use of the verb, *he speaks*, intimating that the word and providence of God make the winds blow, to agitate the sea. True, indeed, the mariners imagine from certain phenomena, that a storm is approaching, but sudden changes proceed only from the secret appointment of God. Therefore, he gives not merely a historical narrative of the manner in which squalls and storms arise, but, assuming the character of a teacher, begins with the cause itself, and then directs to the imminent danger with which the tempest is fraught; or rather, portrays, as in a picture, the image of death, in order that the goodness of God may appear the more conspicuous when the tempest

from the *people*, and the service being much in *antiphona*, or response, part was spoken by them that officiated in the seat of the elders, and the rest by the multitude of common men, the ἰδιῶται, that answered *Amen* at least, at their giving of thanks."—*Hammond.*

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happily ceases without any loss of life. *They mount up*, says he, *to the heavens, they descend into the deeps;* as if he should say, they mount up into the air, so that their life may be destroyed, and then they tumble down towards the caverns of the ocean, where they may be drowned.[1] Next, he mentions the fears which torment them, or rather which may deprive them of understanding; intimating by these words, that however skilfully mariners may steer their vessels, they may happen to be deprived of their senses; and being thus paralyzed, they could not avail themselves of aid, were it even at hand. For though they collect all their tackling, cast their sounding line into the deep, and unfurl their sails to all points, yet after making every attempt, and all human skill is baffled, they give themselves up to the mercy of wind and wave. All hope of safety being cut off, no farther means are employed by them. And now that all human aid fails, they cry unto God for deliverance, which is a convincing evidence that they had been as it were dead.[2]

29. *He maketh the storm a calm.* A profane author, in

[1] "The men of the ship go up to heaven, *i.e.*, rise high in the air when the wave lifteth up the ship, and afterwards, because of the wave they descend to the deep; and from thus ascending and descending, the soul of the men of the ship melteth within them on account of the danger in which they are placed."—*Kimchi.*

[2] The consternation into which those at sea are thrown in a dangerous storm, and their deliverance by God in answer to prayer, is so beautifully described in the well known and admirable hymn of Addison, that we shall take the liberty to quote a part of it:

"Think, O my soul! devoutly think,
How with affrighted eyes,
Thou saw'st the wide-extended deep,
In all its horrors rise.

"Confusion dwelt on every face,
And fear in every heart;
When waves on waves, and gulfs on gulfs,
O'ercame the pilot's art.

"Yet then, from all my griefs, O Lord!
Thy mercy set me free;
Whilst in the confidence of prayer,
My soul took hold on Thee.

"For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High in the broken wave,
I knew Thou wert not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

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narrating the history of such an event, would have said, that the winds were hushed, and the raging billows were calmed; but the Spirit of God, by this change of the storm into a calm, places the providence of God as presiding over all; thereby meaning, that it was not by human agency that this violent commotion of the sea and wind, which threatened to subvert the frame of the world, was so suddenly stilled. When, therefore, the sea is agitated, and boils up in terrific fury, as if wave were contending with wave, whence is it that instantly it is calm and peaceful, but that God restrains the raging of the billows, the contention of which was so awful, and makes the bosom of the deep as smooth as a mirror?[1] Having spoken of their great terror, he proceeds next to mention *their joy*, so that their ingratitude may appear the more striking, if they forget their remarkable deliverance. For they are not in want of a monitor, having been abundantly instructed by the storm itself, and by the calm which ensued, that their lives were in the hand and under the protection of God. Moreover, he informs them that this is a species of gratitude which deserves not only to be acknowledged privately, or to be mentioned in the family, but that it should be praised and magnified in all places, even in the great assemblies. He makes specific mention of *the elders*, intimating that the more wisdom and experience a person

> "The storm was laid, the winds retir'd,
> Obedient to thy will;
> The sea that roar'd at thy command,
> At thy command was still!"

[1] Among the circumstances selected by the prophet in this striking description of a storm at sea, God's agency, both in raising and calming it, is not to be overlooked. He is introduced as first causing, by His omnipotent command, the tempest to sweep over the ocean, whose billows are thus made to rise in furious agitation mountains high: and, again, as hushing the winds into a calm, and allaying the agitation of the waves. The description would be utterly mutilated were the special reference to the Divine power in such phenomena omitted. "How much more comfortable, as well as rational, is the system of the Psalmist, than the Pagan scheme in Virgil, and other poets, where one deity is represented as raising a storm, and another as laying it. Were we only to consider the sublime in this piece of poetry, what can be nobler than the idea it gives us of the Supreme Being, thus raising a tumult among the elements, and recovering them out of their confusion, thus troubling and becalming nature?"—*Spectator*, No. 485.

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has, the more capable is he of listening to, and being a witness of, these praises.

33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and springs of water into dryness ;*
34. *A fruitful land into saltness,*[1] *because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.*
35. *He turneth the desert into a pool of water, and the land of barrenness into springs of water.*
36. *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may build a city of habitation ;*
37. *And sow fields, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of the increase.*
38. *And he blesses them, and they multiply greatly ; and he maketh not their cattle to decrease.*
39. *Afterwards they are lessened and dejected, by reason of anguish, misery, and sorrow.*
40. *He poureth contempt upon princes, and maketh them to wander in a wilderness, where there is no way.*[2]
41. *And he raiseth the afflicted out of misery, and maketh him families like a flock.*

33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness.* Here then is an account of changes which it would be the height of folly to attribute to chance. Fruitful lands become unfruitful, and barren lands assume the new aspect of freshness and fruitfulness. And how happens it that one district becomes sterile, and another becomes fat and fertile, contrary to what they were wont to be, but because that God pours out his wrath upon the inhabitants of the one, by taking his blessing from them, and renders the other fruitful to feed the hungry? It may

[1] "למלחה, *into saltness*, or *barrenness*. The word has here the force of sterility. Pliny says, 'Omnis locus in quo reperitur sal, sterilis est, nihilque gignit.'—Hist. Nat. Lib. xxxi. cap. 7. Allusion is here made to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, 'The whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning; that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath,' (Deut. xxix. 23.) The Chaldee has paraphrased the verse as follows: 'The land of Israel which bore fruit he hath laid waste as Sodom, which was overturned on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants.' "—*Phillips.*

[2] The words of this verse are found in Job xii. 21, 24, from which they are supposed, with great probability, to have been borrowed.

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be ascribed to the thinness of the population, that many parts of Asia and Greece, once exceedingly fruitful, now lie uncultivated and unproductive; but we must ascribe to the providence of God, which the prophet praises, the well authenticated fact, that in some places the earth that was fruitful has now become barren and parched, while others are beginning to be fertile.

It is, however, not sufficient merely to observe, that these wonderful revolutions of the surface of the earth are the result of God's overruling purpose, unless we also observe, in the second place, what the prophet does not omit, that the earth is cursed by him on account of the iniquity of its inhabitants, who prove themselves to be undeserving of being so amply sustained by his bountiful hand. He has put *pools and springs of water* for fields or countries where there is an abundance of water; because moisture is required to nourish the plants by which fruit is produced. The term *saltness* is employed metaphorically, inasmuch as there is nothing more sterile than salt; hence that saying of Christ's, "If the salt have lost its saltness, what further purpose will it serve?" (Mark ix. 50,) not even indeed for barrenness. And, consequently, when men designed to doom any place to remain unproductive, they usually sowed it with salt. And probably it is in allusion to this ancient custom, that the prophet says that the land was covered with salt.

35. *He turneth the desert into a pool of water.* This change, in contrast with the former, places the miraculous power of God in a more luminous position. Because, were the fields ceasing to be so productive as in former times, men of the world, as was common of old, would attribute this to the frequent crops which exhausted their productive power. But whence is it that parched grounds become so fruitful, that one would almost say that the atmosphere, as well as the nature of the soil, had undergone a change, unless it be that God hath there put forth a wonderful display of his power and goodness? Wherefore, the prophet very justly says, that the *deserts were turned into pools of water*, so that populous cities may rise up in waste and uncultivated places, where

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once there was not a single cottage. For it is as improbable that the nature of the soil is changed, as that the course of the sun and stars is changed. The clause, *the hungry are filled*, may mean, either that they themselves, after considerable privations, have got what may supply their need, or that those poor persons, living in a country where they cannot longer find daily bread, being constrained to leave it, and to seek a new place of abode, are there bountifully supplied by God. I am rather disposed to think, that this clause refers to what frequently occurs, namely, that the famishing, whose wants the world refuses to supply, and who are expatriated, are comfortably accommodated in these desert places, where God blesses them with abundance. The passage which I have translated, *fruit of the increase*, is, by not a few Hebrew expositors, considered as a repetition of two synonymous terms, and are for supplying a copulative conjunction, making it, *fruit and increase*. But it was rather the intention of the prophet to refer to fruit yielded annually; as if he said, the fertility of these regions is not temporary, or only for a few years, it is perennial. For תבואות, *tebuaoth*, is the term which, in the Hebrew, denotes full-grown fruit annually produced by the earth. And when he says, that the *new settlers sow and plant*, he gives us to understand, that, prior to their arrival, cultivation was unknown in these places, and, consequently, in becoming so unusually fertile, they assumed a totally different aspect. And, in fine, he adds, that it was entirely owing to the Divine blessing that those who were once oppressed with poverty and want are now daily increasing in the good things of this life.

39. *Afterwards they are lessened.* Ere I enter upon the consideration of the truths contained in this verse, I must make some brief verbal observations. Some make the word עוצר, *otser*, to signify *tyranny*, and certainly עצר, *atsar*, does signify to *bear rule*. But since it is used metaphorically for *anguish*, it appears to me that this is the meaning which is most accordant with the tenor of the passage. The last two words of the verse may be read as in the nominative case, as I have rendered them, or in the genitive, the *anguish*

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of misery and sorrow. This lection appears to me preferable, *through the anguish of misery,*[1] *and through sorrow.*

We come now to notice shortly the main things in the passage. And as we had formerly a description of the changes which these districts underwent in relation to the nature of the soil, so now we are informed that mankind do not for ever continue in the same condition; because they both decrease in number, and lose their place and property by being reduced by wars or by civil commotions, or by other casualties. Therefore, whether theyare wasted by the pestilence, or are defeated in battle, or are cut off by intestine broils, it is manifest that both their rank and condition undergo alteration. And what is the occasion of this change, but that God withdraws his grace, which hitherto formed the hidden spring from which all their prosperity issued? And as there are a thousand casualties by which cities may be ruined, the prophet brings forward one species of change of all others the most palpable and remarkable. And since God's hand is not observed in that which relates to persons living in comparative obscurity, he brings into view princes themselves, whose name and fame will not permit any memorable event which befalls them to remain in obscurity. For it seems that the world is made on their account. When God, therefore, hurls them from their lofty estate, then men, aroused as it were from their slumber, are prepared to regard his judgments. Here, too, the mode of address which is employed must be attended to; in saying, that *God poureth contempt upon princes,* it is as if it was his pleasure, so long as they retained their dignity, that honour and respect should be paid to them. The words of Daniel are well known, "O king, God hath put the fear of thee in the very fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the earth," (Dan. ii. 38.) And assuredly, though princes may clothe themselves with power, yet that inward honour and majesty which God has conferred upon them, is a greater safeguard than any human arm. Nor even would a single village holdout for the space of three days, did not God, by his invisible and invincible agency, put

[1] "Par angoisse de mal et par douleur."—*Fr.*

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a restraint upon the hearts of men. Hence, whenever God renders princes contemptible, their magnificent power must of necessity be subverted. This is a fact corroborated by history, that mighty potentates, who have been the terror and dread of the whole world, when once denuded of their dignity and power, have become the sport even of their own dependants. And inasmuch as such a striking revolution as this should be regarded as a wonderful display of God's power, yet such is the obtuseness of our minds, that we will not acknowledge his overruling providence. As a contrast to these reverses, the prophet afterwards shows, that the poor and ignoble are exalted, and their houses increased, and that those who were held in no estimation, suddenly increase in wealth and power. In these things men would assuredly recognize the providence of God, were it not that the perversity of their minds rendered them insensate.

42. *The righteous shall see that, and shall rejoice : and all iniquity*[1] *shall stop her mouth.*[2]
43. *Whosoever is wise, so as to observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of Jehovah.*

42. *The righteous shall see that, and shall rejoice.* The prophet now draws the conclusion, that so many evident tokens of God's superintending and overruling providence could not transpire before the righteous without attracting their notice, and that their vision being illuminated by faith, these scenes are contemplated by them with unfeigned delight; while the wicked remain perplexed and mute. For he very judiciously makes a distinction between these two classes of persons. In whatever manner the wicked may be constrained to recognize God as the supreme ruler of the universe, nevertheless, in seeing they see not, and derive nothing from the sight, except that their conduct is rendered the more inexcusable.

[1] "*Iniquity* is here personified, and denotes the *iniquitous;* but the abstract is more poetical."—*Dr Geddes.*

[2] The same critic reads, "While all iniquity shall be tongue-tied." "*Tongue-tied,*" says he, "literally *mouth-shut:* which perhaps might be not improperly vernacularized."

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But the righteous are not only able to form a good and sound judgment of these events, they also spontaneously open their eyes to contemplate the equity, goodness, and wisdom of God, the sight and knowledge of which are refreshing to them. For the joy which they experience in this exercise is a pledge that their thus observing these things was the spontaneous effusion of their hearts. With regard to the despisers of God, it is not meant that they are so deeply impressed as truly to acknowledge that the world is under his superintending care, but that they are merely so far kept in check as not to presume to deny the existence of that providence as their natural inclination would lead them to do; or, at least, that they meet with a vigorous repulse whenever they attempt to speak in opposition to it. Although the judgments of God are before their eyes, yet is their understanding so darkened, that they cannot perceive the clear light. And this manner of speaking is more energetic than if it had been said, that the wicked themselves are become mute. In fact, they do not cease from murmuring against God's dispensations of providence; for we see with what arrogance and contempt they set themselves in opposition to our faith, and have the hardihood to pour forth horrid blasphemies against God. This does not impeach the veracity of the prophet's statement, that *the mouth of wickedness is stopped*, because, in fact, the more proudly and violently they assail God, the more notorious does their impiety appear. Besides, the joy here mentioned arises from this, that there is nothing more calculated to increase our faith, than the knowledge of the providence of God; because, without it, we would be harassed with doubts and fears, being uncertain whether or not the world was governed by chance. For this reason, it follows that those who aim at the subversion of this doctrine, depriving the children of God of true comfort, and vexing their minds by unsettling their faith, forge for themselves a hell upon earth. For what can be more awfully tormenting than to be constantly racked with doubt and anxiety? And we will never be able to arrive at a calm state of mind until we are taught to repose with implicit confidence in the providence of God. Moreover, it is declared in this verse, that God

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manifests his goodness to all men without exception, and yet there are comparatively few of them who benefit by it. Wherefore, when he formerly called upon all to celebrate the goodness of God, it was in order that the ingratitude of the majority of them might the more plainly appear.

43. *Whosoever is wise, so as to observe these things.* We are now informed that men begin to be wise when they turn their whole attention to the contemplation of the works of God, and that all others besides are fools. For however much they may pique themselves upon their superior acuteness and subtilty, all this is of no avail so long as they shut their eyes against the light which is presented to them. In employing this interrogatory form of address, he indirectly adverts to that false persuasion which prevails in the world, at the very time when the most daring heaven-despiser esteems himself to be the wisest of men; as if he should say, that all those who do not properly observe the providence of God, will be found to be nothing but fools. This caution is the more necessary, since we find that some of the greatest of philosophers were so mischievous as to devote their talents to obscure and conceal the providence of God, and, entirely overlooking his agency, ascribed all to secondary causes. At the head of these was Aristotle, a man of genius and learning; but being a heathen, whose heart was perverse and depraved, it was his constant aim to entangle and perplex God's overruling providence by a variety of wild speculations; so much so, that it may with too much truth be said, that he employed his naturally acute powers of mind to extinguish all light. Besides, the prophet not only condemns the insensate Epicureans, whose insensibility was of the basest character, but he also informs us that a blindness, still greater and more detestable, was to be found among these great philosophers themselves. By the term, *observe*, he informs us, that the bare apprehension of the works of God is not enough, —they must be carefully considered in order that the knowledge of them may be deliberately and maturely digested. And, therefore, that it may be engraven upon our hearts, we must make these works the theme of our attentive and constant

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meditation. When the prophet says, *Whosoever is wise, even they shall understand*, the change of the singular into the plural number is beautifully appropriate. By the one he tacitly complains of the fewness of those who observe the judgments of God; as if he should say, How seldom do we meet with a person who truly and attentively considers the works of God! Then he adverts to the fact of their being so visibly before all, that it is impossible that men could overlook them, were it not that their minds are perverted by their own wickedness. And if any person be disposed to inquire how it comes to pass that the prophet, after treating of the judgments and severity of God, now makes mention of his loving-kindness, I answer, that his loving-kindness shines most conspicuously, and occupies a very prominent place in all that he does; for he is naturally prone to loving-kindness, by which also he draws us to himself.

PSALM CVIII.

¶ A Song or Psalm of David.

1. *My heart is prepared, O God! my heart is prepared; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.*
2. *Awake, psaltery and harp: I will arise at break of day.*
3. *I will praise thee, O Jehovah! among the people; and sing unto thee among the nations:*
4. *Because thy goodness is great above the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.*
5. *Be thou, O God! exalted above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth:*
6. *That thy chosen may be set free, save me by thy right hand, and hear me.*
7. *God has spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and measure the valley of Succoth.*
8. *Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is the strength of my head: Judah is my lawgiver.*[1]

[1] "Ou, mon duc."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, my leader."

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9. *Moab is the pot of my washing ; over Edom I will cast my shoe; over Philistina I will triumph.*
10. *Who will bring me into the fortified city ? who will bring me even unto Edom ?*
11. *Wilt not thou, O God! who hadst repulsed us ? and wentest not out, O God! with our armies ?*
12. *Afford us help out of our tribulations; because the help of man is vain.*
13. *Through God we will do valiantly, and he shall trample under foot our enemies.*

Because this psalm is composed of parts taken from the fifty-seventh and sixtieth psalms, it would be superfluous to repeat, in this place, what we have already said by way of exposition in those psalms.[1]

PSALM CIX.

This psalm consists of three parts. It begins with a complaint; next follows an enumeration of various imprecations; and then comes a prayer with an expression of true gratitude. And although David here complains of the injuries which he sustained, yet, as he was a typical character, everything that is expressed in the psalm must properly be applied to Christ, the Head of the Church, and to all the faithful, inasmuch as they are his members; so that when unjustly treated and tormented by their enemies, they may apply to God for help, to whom vengeance belongs.[2]

[1] "The 108th psalm is altogether made up of extracts from the others; its first part being identical (with the exceptions of a few slight variations) with the third division of the 57th; its second, with the second division of the 60th. And both these borrowed parts are discriminated, both in the 57th and 60th psalms, from the rest of the context by the word Selah. This is a remarkable fact, and illustrates strongly one of the functions of the Diapsalma. These parts were, then, to a certain degree, regarded as distinct compositions, which occasionally were disjointed from their original context; the very change of sentiment and strain, which originated the word Diapsalma, sanctioning such an occasional practice."—*Jebb's Literal Version of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations*, vol. ii. p. 109.

[2] From the express application of a part of this awfully prophetic poem to Judas by the Apostle Peter, (Acts i. 20,) we learn that the punishment and sufferings of that unhappy man form its subject. It has also

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¶ To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David.

1. *O God of my praise! be not silent;*
2. *Because the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit are opened upon me: they have spoken against me with the tongue of guile.*
3. *And they have encompassed me with the words of hatred, and have contended with me without cause.*
4. *On account of my love they have been opposed to me; but I gave myself to prayer.*
5. *They rendered to me evil for good, and hatred for love.*

1. *O God of my praise! be not silent.* In these words, which may be considered as an introduction to the psalm, David declares that he neither could find nor would desire any other than God to stand forward in vindication of the integrity of his heart. For in denominating him *the God of his praise*, he intrusts to him the vindication of his innocence, in the face of the calumnies by which he was all but universally assailed. Some are of opinion that this clause is to be understood as referring to David's having actually declared that he himself was the publisher of God's praises; but the scope of the passage is opposed to such an interpretation; for we find David appealing to the judgment of God against the unjust and cruel hatred to which he was subjected in the world. There is in the words an implied contrast, because, when calumny is rampant, innocence is duly and properly estimated by none but God only. The meaning of the passage is this: Lord, although I may be regarded as the vilest

been justly viewed as shadowing forth, not merely the fate of the wretched Iscariot, and his immediate associates, but the dreadful and justly-merited destiny of the Jewish polity and nation. "The first five verses of this psalm," says Horsley, "clearly describe the treatment which our Lord met with from the Jews. The curses that follow as clearly describe the judgments which have fallen upon that miserable people. So that the whole is a prediction of his sufferings, and of their punishment, delivered in the form of complaint and imprecation." Whatever, therefore, may be said as to the primary reference of the psalm to the lamentations and denunciations poured forth by David, in consequence of the perfidy and cruelty of some inveterate foe, Christ must be principally understood as the person who gives utterance to these lamentations and denunciations, occasioned by the injurious treatment he received from his betrayer and murderers.—See *Appendix*.

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of the vile, and exposed to the reproach of the world, yet thou wilt maintain the uprightness of my character, and on this account thou wilt also set forth my praise.[1] This interpretation corresponds well with that which is immediately subjoined, *be not silent*. For when we are overwhelmed by the aspersions of the wicked, it would surely be improper on the part of God, who is the witness of our innocence, to remain silent. At the same time, what I formerly stated must not be forgotten, that while David mourns over the injuries which he in particular was suffering, yet, in his own person, he represented Christ, and the whole body of his Church. From this we are taught, when we are subjected to every species of indignity by men, to repose with perfect confidence under the protection of God alone. No man, however, can, with sincerity of heart, surrender himself entirely into the hand of God, except he has first formed the resolution of treating with contempt the reproaches of the world, and is also fully persuaded that he has God as the defender of his cause.

2. *Because the mouth of the wicked.* David here very plainly declares, that he was the more solicitous to obtain help from God, in consequence of justice not being found among men. And though it is probable that he was rashly and furiously assailed, nevertheless, he complains that the mouth of deceit and fraud had been opened against him, and that he was surrounded with false tongues. Whence, to those who were ignorant of his real situation, there would appear to be some plausible pretext for his being loaded with reproaches,

[1] The Septuagint and Vulgate attach the same meaning to the Psalmist's prayer. The reading of the former being, Ὁ Θεός, τὴν αἴνεσίν μου μὴ παρασιωπήσῃς, and that of the latter, "Deus, laudem meam ne tacueris," *O God! be not silent of my praise.* The phrase, as it stands in the Hebrew text, is, however, capable of a double signification; for it may refer either to God's praising David, or to David's praising God. In the one case, it will intimate that God was the object of his praise; in which sense it is said, Deut. x. 21, "He is thy praise, and He is thy God," and will mean, Be not silent to refuse, neglect not my praising of thee. In the other sense the prayer is, as our author states, Whilst others reproach me, be not silent of my praise, be thou my advocate, plead my causes, proclaim and justify my innocence.

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so much so indeed, that he would not be able to evade the charge of criminality.

3. *And they have encompassed me.* He complains, that from all quarters he was assailed with the most hostile and abusive epithets, and that, too, most undeservedly. And, under a beautiful similitude, he shows that the tongues of his enemies were so full of deadly poison, that it was harder for him to endure their attacks than that of a great army, and the more so that he merited no such treatment at their hands. This species of warfare, to the exercise of which God very frequently summons his children, must be carefully considered by us. For though Satan may assault them with open violence, yet as he is the father of lies, he endeavours, by the amazing dexterity which he possesses in heaping calumny upon them, to tarnish their reputation, as if they were the most abandoned of mankind. Now, as that which was prefigured by David was fulfilled in Christ, so we must remember, that that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ is daily filling up in believers, Col. i. 24; because, he having once suffered in himself, calls them to be sharers and associates with him in his sufferings.

4. *On account of my love they have been opposed to me.*[1] The Psalmist had already solemnly declared, that his adversaries, unprovoked by any injury inflicted upon them by him, and without any just cause, became, through mere diabolical rage, his most implacable foes. Here he confirms the truth of that declaration by saying, that he had been their friend. For there is far more merit in showing kindness to an enemy than simply abstaining from doing that which is evil. And from this we may perceive, that the influence of Satan must be awfully powerful when he takes the hearts of men captive at his will. For nothing can be more unnatural than to hate and cruelly persecute those who love us. To *love* he also

[1] "This expression," says Hengstenberg, "finds its full truth in Christ. Christ's love to man was daily manifested by his miraculous healing all the infirmities of the body, which was returned by man's hatred of Him, as displayed in his general conduct."

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adds deeds of kindness, meaning, that it was his aim to secure their good will by outward acts of beneficence.

5. *But I gave myself to prayer.*[1] Some are of opinion, that these words refer to David's pouring out a prayer for his enemies at the very moment when they were furiously assaulting him, and with this opinion corresponds that which we have stated in Psalm xxxv. 13. But the more plain, and, to me, the preferable interpretation, is, that when he was attacked in a cruel and hostile manner, he did not betake himself to such unlawful means as the rendering of evil for evil, but committed himself into the hand of God, fully satisfied that he alone could guard him from all ill. And it is assuredly a great and desirable attainment for a man so to restrain his passions as directly and immediately to make his appeal to God's tribunal, at the very time when he is abused without a cause, and when the very injuries which he sustains are calculated to excite him to avenge them. For there are some persons who, while it is their aim to live in terms of friendship with the good, coming in contact with ill men, imagine that they are at perfect liberty to return injury for injury; and to this temptation all the godly feel that they are liable. The Holy Spirit, however, restrains us, so that though oftimes provoked by the cruelty of our enemies to seek revenge, we yet abandon all fraudulent and violent means, and betake ourselves by prayer to God alone. By this example, which David here sets before us, we are instructed that we must have recourse to the same means if we would wish to overcome our enemies through the power and protection of God. In Psalm lxix. 13, we have a parallel passage: "They that sit in the gate spake against me; and I was the song of those who drink strong drink. But my prayer was made to thee, O Jehovah!" In that passage, as well as in the one under review, the mode of expression is elliptical. Besides, it is the design of David in these words to inform

[1] In the Hebrew, the sentence is very short and imperfect, "But I prayer;" I am a man of prayer; or, I betake myself to prayer. Thus "I peace" is put for "I am for peace."—Ps. cxx. 7.

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us, that although he was aware that the whole world was opposed to him, yet he could cast all his cares upon God, and this was enough to render his mind calm and composed. And as the Holy Spirit taught David and all the godly to offer up prayers like these, it must follow, that those who, in this respect, imitate them, will be promptly helped by God when he beholds them reproachfully and vilely persecuted.

6. *Set*[1] *thou over him a wicked person; and let the adversary stand at his right hand.*
7. *When he is judged, let him depart guilty, and let his prayer be turned into sin.*[2]
8. *Let his days be few:*[3] *and let another receive his office.*
9. *Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow:*

[1] "The spirit of prophecy is blended in a high degree with all the denunciations which follow, and which have relation to the impenitent Jews, and to the traitorous apostle."—*Morison.*

[2] "When his cause shall be examined, and when sentence shall be pronounced, let him, as the original signifies, go out guilty; in other words, let him be condemned; and when he pleads for a pardon, or for a mitigation of his sentence, let his petition, instead of receiving a favourable answer, be regarded as an aggravation of his crime."—*Morison.* Horsley understands the last clause as referring to the Jewish worship, which, he affirms, is now become sin, as it contains a standing denial of our Lord. Fry admits that Horsley's exposition of this line is ingenious. "But," says he, "תפלה, [which Calvin renders *prayer*,] from its etymology, and from its usage, Job xvi. 17, may be understood to mean a judicial sentence, and the parallelism in this place strongly argues for such an interpretation. Let the decision on him be 'Guilty.'" Accordingly, he reads, "On his trial let him come forth condemned, and let the decision be, For sin."

[3] "*His days shall be few.* Hengstenberg says this word means *few times*, as if he considered it a substantive rather than an adjective; but it is doubtless an adjective belonging to ימין, *(his days.)* The expression denotes that the man here spoken of should not live to a full age, but should meet with a premature death, either violently by the hands of others or by his own, as was the case with Judas. An untimely death is often mentioned in the Old Testament as a punishment on men who are eminently guilty. 'Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,' Ps. lv. 23. See also Prov. x. 27. This passage is applicable not to Judas only, but also to the Jews in general, for after the crucifixion of our Lord, their days were few; they were soon dispossessed of their country, and became the outcasts of the earth."—*Phillips.* Horsley also explains this of the days of the Jewish commonwealth, which were very few after our Lord's ascension; and the subsequent clause, "let another receive his office," he understands as denoting that "the Christian Church is become the depository of revelation, which was the particular charge of the Jewish race."

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10. *And*[1] *let his children wander without any settled habitation, and let them be beggars, and let them seek food out of their waste places.*[2]

11. *Let the extortioner*[3] *seize*[4] *all that belongs to him, and let strangers spoil his labour.*

6. *Set thou over him a wicked person.*[5] Hitherto he poured out his complaint against a vast number of persons; now he seems to direct it against a single individual. Probably he

[1] "The 10th and 11th verses allude to the state of the Jews in their dispersion, having nowhere any settled home."—*Horsley.*

[2] Horsley reads this verse as follows:—

"Let his children be mere vagabonds, and beg;
Let them be driven out from the very ruins of their dwelling."

"For ידרשׁן," says he, "the LXX. had ינרשׁן; 'let them be driven out.' This reading Houbigant and Archbishop Secker approve. The image is, vagabonds seeking a miserable shelter among the ruins of decayed and demolished buildings, and not suffered to remain even in such places undisturbed."

[3] "Literally, 'the lender' or 'creditor.' But from the hard-heartedness of the Jews towards their debtors, of which we have instances in 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 1-13; the word seems in latter times to have carried a bad sense; and so it is rendered in our translation, 'the extortioner.'"—*Mant.*

[4] "ינקשׁ, *shall catch*, or *secure*. It seems to denote, *to catch by laying snares*. See Ps. xxxviii. 13. This sense suits very well this passage; for the usurer is accustomed to obtain the substance of men by all kinds of artifices."—*Phillips.* Horsley renders, "draw his net over all that he hath." How striking a representation of the treatment which the Jews, since the time of the last destruction of their city, and their dispersion by the Romans, have received from almost all nations among whom they have been scattered! For some time they have been permitted to live in Britain, Holland, and Germany, unmolested; but what a tale of misery does the tyrannical exactions of which they have been the prey for centuries constitute!

[5] Dr Geddes translates the 6th verse thus:—

"May he be tried by a wicked judge;
And at his right had be placed the accuser."

On which he has the following note:—"*May he be tried by a wicked judge.* He alludes to courts of judicature: and wishes that his enemy may have a *severe*, nay, *wicked* judge,—certainly one of the greatest curses that can befall one.—*And at his right hand be placed the accuser.* Instead of a friend or advocate to stand by him, let his only attendant be an accuser. What imagery this! But the height of the metaphor is in the next verse:—

'When he is judged, may he be found guilty:
And may his deprecation only aggravate his crime.'"

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speaks of each of them individually. It is, however, equally probable that he refers in very marked terms to some one in particular among these wicked persons, the most notorious transgressor of any of them. Some conjecture, and not without reason, that Doeg is the person here aimed at, who, by his treason and revolt, sought to bring ruin, not only upon David, but also upon all the holy priests; and we know that this psalm is applied by Peter to Judas, (Acts i. 20.) But with equal propriety, and certainly not less forcibly, may this complaint be considered as applicable to some most intimate and particular friend of the Psalmist. Respecting the imprecations contained in this psalm, it will be proper to keep in mind what I have said elsewhere, that when David forms such maledictions, or expresses his desires for them, he is not instigated by any immoderate carnal propensity, nor is he actuated by zeal without knowledge, nor is he influenced by any private personal considerations. These three matters must be carefully weighed, for in proportion to the amount of self-esteem which a man possesses, is he so enamoured with his own interests as to rush headlong upon revenge. Hence it comes to pass, that the more a person is devoted to selfishness, he will be the more immoderately addicted to the advancement of his own individual interests. This desire for the promotion of personal interest gives birth to another species of vice. For no one wishes to be avenged upon his enemies because that such a thing would be right and equitable, but because it is the means of gratifying his

With this corresponds the interpretation of Phillips. With Hammond, he understands *to set over* as denoting *to set over as a judge* or *inspector*. "This notion of setting over," he observes, "corresponds with the next member; for there it says, *and an enemy shall stand at his right hand*, which shows that the wicked man was to be appointed to act as a judge. The man at his right hand denotes an accuser, agreeably to the custom which prevailed in a Jewish court of justice, of placing the accuser at the right hand of the accused, (see Zech. iii. 1;) and hence we understand in this verse רשׁע to be mentioned as acting in the capacity of a judge, and שׂטן in that of an accuser." Cresswell gives a similar explanation of the passage. Green, who follows Dr Sykes in thinking that the imprecations from this verse to verse 17 were pronounced not by David upon his enemies, but by David's enemies upon him, reads the verse thus:—"Set a wicked man over him, *say they, to hear his cause*, and let a false accuser stand at his right hand."

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own spiteful propensity. Some, indeed, make a pretext of righteousness and equity in the matter, but the spirit of malignity, by which they are inflamed, effaces every trace of justice, and blinds their minds.

When these two vices, selfishness and carnality, are corrected, there is still another thing demanding correction, the repressing the ardour of foolish zeal, in order that we may follow the Spirit of God as our guide. Should any one, under the influence of perverse zeal, produce David as an example of it, that would not be an example in point; for to such a person may be very aptly applied the answer which Christ returned to his disciples, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 55. How detestable a piece of sacrilege is it on the part of the monks, and especially the Franciscan friars, to pervert this psalm by employing it to countenance the most nefarious purposes! If a man harbour malice against a neighbour, it is quite a common thing for him to engage one of these wicked wretches to curse him, which he would do by daily repeating this psalm. I know a lady in France who hired a parcel of these friars to curse her own and only son in these words.

But I return to David, who, free from all inordinate passion, breathed forth his prayers under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Then, as to the ungodly, who live as the contemners of God, and who are constantly plotting the overthrow of the unsuspecting and the good, casting off all restraint, so that neither modesty nor honesty proves a check to them, surely they are deserving of the punishment of *having a wicked person set over them.* And since, by means of intrigue and perfidy, they are constantly aiming at the extermination of the good, they are most justly punished by God, who raises up against them an adversary that should never depart from their side. Only let believers be on their guard, lest they should betray too much haste in their prayers, and let them rather leave room for the grace of God to manifest itself in their behalf; because it may turn out that the man, who to-day bears towards us a deadly enmity, may by to-morrow through that grace become our friend.

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7. *When he is judged, let him depart guilty.* Another imprecation is, that, being summoned to judgment, he might be punished without mercy, and that, though he humbly crave forgiveness, the judge should remain inexorable. This might with propriety be understood to relate not merely to his being judged at the bar of men, but also at the tribunal of God. But as it accords very well with the decisions awarded by an earthly judge, and as this is the commonly received interpretation, I have no wish to depart from it. There are two things which must be noticed here; that the wickedness of the wicked may be so palpable as to leave no room to escape from the execution of justice, and that all their entreaties for pardon may be disregarded. Accordingly, the Psalmist represents him as a condemned criminal leaving the presence of the judge, bearing the ignominy of the condemnation which he righteously merited, having his nefarious deeds disclosed and detected. With respect to the other interpretation which places the ungodly before God's judgment-seat, it by no means appears absurd to say that their prayers should be turned against them to sin, the more especially as we know that all their sacrifices are an abomination unto him. And by how much they themselves are filthy, by so much do all their plausible virtues become offensive and displeasing to God. But as the scope of the passage is in favour of that interpretation which applies it to earthly judges, I do not consider it necessary to insist farther upon this point.

8. *Let his days be few.* Although this world is the scene of much toil and trouble, yet we know that these are pledges and proofs of God's loving-kindness, inasmuch as he frequently, and as a token of his love, promises to prolong the lives of men; not that it is absolutely necessary for us to remain long here, but that we may have an opportunity of sharing of God's fatherly love which he bears towards us, by which we may be led to cherish the hope of immortality. Now, in opposition to this, the brevity of human life is here introduced as a mark of God's disapprobation; for when he cuts off the wicked after a violent manner, he thus testifies

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that they did not deserve to breathe the breath of life. And the same sentiment is inculcated when, denuding them of their honour and dignity, he hurls them from the place of power and authority. The same thing may also happen to the children of God, for temporal evils are common to the good and to the bad; at the same time, these are never so mingled and blended together, but that one may perceive occasionally the judgments of God in a very manifest and marked manner. Peter, quoting this verse, Acts i. 20, says it behoved to be fulfilled in Judas, because it is written here, "let another take his bishopric." And this he does on the assumed principle of interpretation that David here spoke in the person of Christ. To this it cannot be objected, that the Hebrew term פְּקֻדָּה, *pekudah*, signifies generally *superintendence*,[1] because Peter very properly applies it to the apostleship of Judas. In expounding this passage, sometimes in reference to a wife, or to the soul, (which is a precious jewel in man,) or to wealth and property, there is good reason to believe that, in doing so, the Jewish interpreters are actuated by pure malice. What purpose can it serve to pervert the sense of a word, the meaning of which is so pointed and plain, unless that, under the influence of a malignant spirit, they endeavour so to obscure the passage, as to make it appear not to be properly quoted by Peter? From these words we learn, that there is no cause why the ungodly should be proud while their reputation is high in this world, seeing they cannot after all escape from that doom which the Holy Spirit here declares awaits them. Here too we are furnished with very valuable matter of comfort and patience, when we hear that, however elevated may be their rank and reputation now, their downfall is approaching, and that they will soon be stript of all their pomp and power. In the two succeeding verses the malediction is extended both to the wife and children; and the desire, that she may be left a widow and they become fatherless, depends upon the brevity of that life to which the prophet formerly adverted. Mention is likewise made of *beggary*, and the want of all the

[1] "Præfecturam generaliter significet."—*Lat.* "Signifie generallement Superintendence."—*Fr.*

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necessaries of life, which is a proof of the magnitude of their guilt; for assuredly the Holy Spirit would not denounce against them a punishment so grievous and heavy for a trivial offence. In delivering up his property[1] as booty to the *extortioners*, David must be understood as alluding to the poverty which was to overtake his children; for he is not speaking of a poor and mean person who at his death can leave nothing to his family, but of one who, regardless of right or wrong, has amassed wealth to enrich his children, but from whom God takes away the goods which he had unrighteously taken from others.

12. *Let there be none prolonging mercy to him: and let there be none to pity his fatherless children.*
13. *Let his posterity be cut off; in the next generation let their name be effaced.*
14. *Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before Jehovah; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.*
15. *Let them be before Jehovah continually, and let him cut off their memorial from the earth.*[2]
16. *Because he forgot to show mercy, but persecuted the afflicted and poor man, and the sorrowful in heart, that he might slay him.*

12. *Let there be none prolonging mercy to him.* To continue to show humanity and mercy is, according to the Hebrew idiom, equivalent to constant and successive acts of kindness; and it also sometimes denotes pity, or the being moved to sympathy, when, through the lapse of years, anger is appeased, and even one's calamity melts the heart of the man who bore hatred towards him.[3] Accordingly, there are some who understand this clause to mean, that there will be none to show kindness to his offspring; which interpretation is in conformity with the next clause of the verse. David, however, includes also the wicked man himself along with his children;

[1] "Quand il donne les biens en proye aux *exacteurs*."—*Fr.*
[2] "Tarnovius says, the passage treats not concerning all memory, but only of an honourable one."—*Phillips.*
[3] "Et mesmes la calamite de quelqu'un amollit le ceur de celuy qui luy portoit haine."—*Fr.*

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as if he should say, Though he visibly pine away under such calamities, and these descend to his children, yet let no one show pity towards them. We are aware it not unfrequently happens, that the long-continued misfortune of an enemy either excites the sympathy of men of savage dispositions, or else makes them forget all their hatred and malevolence. But in this part of the psalm, David expresses a desire that his enemy and all his posterity may be so hated and detested, that the people may never be wearied with beholding the calamities which they endure, but may become so familiarised with the spectacle, as if their hearts were of iron. At the same time, let it be remarked, that David is not rashly excited by any personal anguish to speak in this manner, but that it is as God's messenger he declares the punishment which was impending over the ungodly. And verily the law accounts it as one of the judgments of God, his hardening men's hearts, so that they who have been passionately and unmercifully cruel, should find no sympathy, Deut. ii. 30. It is just that the same measure which they have used towards others, should also be meted out to themselves.

13. *Let his posterity be cut off.* This is a continuation of the same subject, upon the consideration of which the prophet had just now entered, that God would visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children. And as he had to deal with the whole court of Saul, and not with any single individual, he here employs the plural number. But as in deeds of wickedness, there are always some who are the prime movers, and act as the ringleaders of others, we need not be surprised that having spoken of one person, he next addresses the many, and then returns to the same person. The more natural and simple mode of explanation is to refer it to his offspring, for the Hebrew term which signifies *posterity* is collective, implying a multitude, and not a single individual only. This is a heavier imprecation than the former. It sometimes happens, that a family, overthrown by an unexpected disaster, rises up again at a subsequent period; here, however, it is the wish of the prophet, that the

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wicked may be so completely ruined, as never to be able to regain their former state; for thus much is implied in *their name being effaced in the next generation*, or after the lapse of ages.

And as the destruction which he denounces against the houses and families of the wicked is so extensive, that God punishes them in the person of their posterity, so he desires that *God may remember the iniquities of their fathers and mothers*, in order that their condemnation may be complete; and this is a principle in perfect accordance with the commonly received doctrine of Scripture. God, out of regard to his covenant, which is in force to a thousand generations, extends and continues his mercy towards posterity; but he also punishes iniquity unto the third and fourth generation. In doing this he does not involve the guiltless with the wicked indiscriminately, but by withholding from the reprobate the grace and illumination of his Spirit, he prepares the vessels of wrath for destruction, even before they are born, Rom. ix. 21. To the common sense of mankind, the thought of such severity is horrifying: but then we must recollect, that if we attempt to measure the secret and inscrutable judgments of God by our finite minds, we do him wrong. Struck with horror at the severity of this threatening, let us improve it as the means of filling us with reverence and godly fear. In reference to the language of Ezekiel, xviii. 20, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, but the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" we know that in these words he disproves the groundless complaints of the people, who, boasting that they were guiltless, imagined that they were punished wrongfully. When, however, God continues his vengeance from the father to the children, he leaves them no room for palliation or complaint, because they are all equally guilty. We have already said, that vengeance commences when God in withdrawing his Spirit, both from the children and the fathers, delivers them over to Satan. Some may inquire how it comes to pass, that the prophet, in desiring that their sin *may be continually before God's eyes*, does not likewise add, let their name be blotted out from heaven, but merely wishes them *to be cut off, and to perish in the world?* My reply is, that he spoke agreeably to the custom of the age in

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which he lived, when the nature of spiritual punishments was not so well understood as in our times, because the period had not yet arrived, when the revelation of God's will was to be full and complete. Besides, it is the design of David, that the vengeance of God may be so manifest, that the whole world may acquiesce in his equity as a judge.

16. *Because he forgot to show mercy.* The prophet comes now to show that he had good reason for desiring such awful and direful calamities to be inflicted upon his enemies, whose thirst for cruelty was insatiable, and who were transported with rage, no less cruel than obstinate, against the afflicted and poor man, persecuting him with as little scruple as if they were attacking a dead dog. Even philosophers look upon cruelty, directed against the helpless and miserable, as an act worthy only of a cowardly and grovelling nature; for it is between equals that envy is cherished. For this reason the prophet represents the malignity of his enemies as being bitter in persecuting him when he was in *affliction and poverty.* The expression, *the sorrowful in heart,* is still more emphatic. For there are persons who, notwithstanding of their afflictions, are puffed up with pride; and as this conduct is unreasonable and unnatural, these individuals incur the displeasure of the powerful. On the other hand, it would be a sign of desperate cruelty to treat with contempt the lowly and dejected in heart. Would not this be to fight with a shadow? This insatiable cruelty is still farther pointed out by the phrase, *forgetting to show mercy;* the meaning of which is, that the calamities, with which he beheld this guiltless and miserable man struggling, fail to excite his pity, so that, out of regard to the common lot of humanity, he should lay aside his savage disposition. In this passage, therefore, the contrast is equally balanced on the one side between such obstinate pride, and on the other, the strict and irrevocable judgment of God. And as David spoke only as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, this imprecation must be received as if God himself should thunder from his celestial throne. Thus, in the one case, by denouncing vengeance against the ungodly, he subdues and restrains our perverse inclinations,

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which might lead us to injure a fellow-creature; and on the other, by imparting comfort to us, he mitigates and moderates our sorrow, so that we patiently endure the ills which they inflict upon us. The wicked may for a time revel with impunity in the gratification of their lusts; but this threatening shows that it is no vain protection which God vouchsafes to the afflicted. But let the faithful conduct themselves meekly, that their humility and contrition of spirit may come up before God with acceptance. And as we cannot distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, it is our duty to pray for all who trouble us; to desire the salvation of all men; and even to be careful for the welfare of every individual. At the same time, if our hearts are pure and peaceful, this will not prevent us from freely appealing to God's judgment, that He may cut off the finally impenitent.[1]

17. *As he loved cursing, so let it come upon him:*[2] *as he did not take delight in blessing, so let it be far from him.*

18. *And as he clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, so let it come as water into his bowels, and as oil into his bones.*[3]

[1] "Ut desperatos omnes malè perdat."—*Lat.* "Afin qu'il extermine tous ceux qui sont du tout desesperez."—*Fr.*

[2] "This curse alludes to the imprecation by which the Jews ventured to take upon themselves the guilt of our Lord's death, when Pilate pronounced him innocent. The blessing, 'on which they set not their heart,' was that which they might have obtained from our Lord."—*Horsley.*

[3] The Hebrew word for *garment* in this verse signifies, according to Parkhurst, "a long robe, a garment commensurate with the body." See his Lexicon, מר, iii. Horsley renders it, "a garment fitted to him," which he takes to be the precise sense of מרן. The phrase in the following verse he renders, "as the close garment which wraps him." In the second clause there is probably an allusion to the water of jealousy. See Num. v. 18. More forcible language than that of this and the subsequent verse could not be employed to convey the strength and perfection of that curse which fell on the Jewish nation; and the condition of that people, ever since their dispersion by the Romans, affords abundant evidence that the terms here made use of, strong as they are, to predict this condition, are but barely adequate to afford us a just notion of its sad reality. "The curse that lighted on the Jewish nation," observes Bishop Horne, in illustration of this and the next verse, "is resembled, for its universality and adhesion, to a 'garment' which covereth the whole man, and is 'girded' close about his loins; for its diffusive and penetrating nature to 'water,' which from the stomach passeth into

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19. *Let it be to him as a mantle to cover him, and a girdle to gird himself with continually.*
20. *Let this be the work from Jehovah of those who are hostile to me, and of those who speak evil against my soul.*

17. *As he loved cursing.* David still continues to enumerate the sins of his adversaries, and is thus severe in his treatment of them, in order to render it more apparent, that he is strictly conforming to the judgment of God. For as often as we draw near to the tribunal of God, we must take care that the equity of our cause may be so sure and evident as to secure for it and us a favourable reception from him. Fortified by the testimony of an approving conscience, David here declares his readiness to commit the matter between him and his enemies to the judgment of God. The words, which are expressive of cursing and blessing, are in the past tense, *cursing came upon him, and blessing was far from him*, but it is necessary to translate them as expressive of a wish or desire; for David continues to pray that his enemy may be visited with the same unparalleled ills which he had inflicted upon others. A stranger to every act of kindness, and taking pleasure in doing evil, it is the wish of the Psalmist that he may now be subjected to every species of calamity. Some take *malediction* to mean *cursing and imprecation*, thereby intimating that this man was so addicted to execration, that mischief and malevolence were constantly in his heart, and proceeding from his lips. While I do not reject this opinion, I am yet disposed to take a more extended view of the passage, That by injury and abuse, he aimed at the suppression and abolition of every mark of kindness, and that he took delight in the calamities which he beheld coming upon the unsuspecting and the good.

Not a few interpreters translate the next two verses in the

the 'bowels,' and is dispersed through all the vessels of the frame; and to 'oil,' which imperceptibly insinuates itself into the very 'bones.' When that unhappy multitude, assembled before Pontius Pilate, pronounced the words, 'His blood be on us and on our children,' then did they put on the envenomed garment, which has stuck to and tormented the nation ever since; then did they eagerly swallow down that deadly draught, the effects whereof have been the infatuation and misery of 1700 years."

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past form, *He clothed himself with cursing, &c.*, which would be tantamount to saying that the enemy was as fond of cursing as of costly apparel, or that he clothed himself with it as with a garment, and that, like an inveterate disease, it was deeply seated in the marrow of his bones. The other interpretation is more simple, That cursing should cleave to the wicked, that it should envelop him like a cloak, gird him about as his girdle, and should even penetrate to his bones. And that no one may rashly take for an example what David here spoke by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, let him keep in mind that the Psalmist is not pleading here in reference to any personal interest, and that it is no ordinary character to whom he refers. Belonging to the number of the faithful, he would not omit the law of charity, in desiring the salvation of all men. But in this instance God elevated his spirit above all earthly considerations, stript him of all malice, and delivered him from the influence of turbulent passion, so that he might, with holy calmness and spiritual wisdom, doom the reprobate and castaway to destruction. Others would have the phrase, *he loved cursing*, to mean that he purposely drew down the vengeance of God upon himself, as it were procuring destruction for himself by his open hostility to him; but this is an unnatural construction of the passage. The interpretation which I have given is preferable, That he was so addicted to mischief and wrong, that no act of justice or kindness was to be expected from him. In the meantime, let it be observed, that all the machinations of the wicked will eventually recoil upon their own heads, and that when they are raging more violently against others, then it is that the mischief, which they so eagerly desire may come upon them, falls upon themselves, even as the wind called Cecias by blowing attracts the clouds unto him.

20. *Let this be the work from Jehovah.* That is, let the gain or reward of the work be from God. In pointing out the work as proceeding immediately from God, he intends to show that, though deprived of all human aid, he yet entertained the hope that God would grant him deliverance, and avenge the injuries of his servant. From this verse we learn that David

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did not rashly, or unadvisedly, utter curses against his enemies, but strictly adhered to what the Spirit dictated. I acknowledge, indeed, that not a few, while they pretend a similar confidence and hope, nevertheless, recklessly rush beyond the bounds of temperance and moderation. But that which David beheld by the unclouded eye of faith, he also uttered with a zeal becoming a sound mind; for having devoted himself to the cultivation of piety, and being protected by the hand of God, he was aware that the day was approaching when his enemies would meet with merited punishment. From which we also learn, that his trust was placed in God alone, and that he did not regard the persons of men so as to direct his course according as the world smiled or frowned upon him. And, assuredly, whosoever places his dependance on men, shall find that the most trifling incident will annoy him. Therefore, should the whole world abandon us, it becomes us, in imitation of this holy man, to lift up our heads to heaven, and thence look for our defender and deliverer. If it be his intention to employ human instrumentality for our deliverance, he will soon raise up those who will accomplish his purpose. Should he, for the trial of our faith, deprive us of all earthly assistance, instead of regarding that as any reflection upon the glory of his name, we ought to wait until the proper time arrive when he will fully display that decision in which we can calmly acquiesce.

21. *And thou, O Jehovah my Lord! undertake for me, for thy name's sake; deliver me, because thy mercy is good;*
22. *Because I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.*
23. *I walk about as a shadow when it declineth;*[1] *I am tossed as the locust.*[2]

[1] Horsley translates, "I am just gone, like the shadow stretched to its utmost length." The allusion is to the state of the shadows of terrestrial objects at sun-set, lengthening every instant, and growing faint as they lengthen, and in the instant that they shoot to an immeasurable length, disappearing. *As a shadow, when it is extended* by the sun's setting, is approaching to evanescence, so, saith the speaker in this psalm, I am fast disappearing; that is, am approaching the end of mortal life.

[2] The Hebrew word for *locust* is in the singular number; but the Septuagint reads in the plural, and a plurality may be intended. Locusts

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24. *My knees are become feeble through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness.*
25. *But I became a reproach to them; when they see me they shake their head.*
26. *Help me, O Jehovah my God! save me according to thy mercy:*
27. *And they shall know that this is thy hand, and that thou, O Jehovah! hast done it.*

21. *And thou, O Jehovah my Lord!* From the pouring out of complaints and imprecations against his enemies, the Psalmist passes to prayers; or rather, after having betaken himself to God as his guardian and deliverer, he appears to take occasion, from this circumstance, to encourage himself in prayer; even as all the pious reflections by which the faithful exercise and strengthen their faith, stimulate them to call upon the name of God. At the same time, he does not pique himself upon any service which he has rendered to God, as deserving of his help, nor does he rely upon his own worthiness, but he places all his confidence in the free grace and mercy of God. That integrity of which he was conscious, he placed in opposition to his enemies, for the purpose of making their iniquity more manifest; but he does not aspire after any recompense from God, because he adopts the nobler

are accustomed to fly in great numbers, and the swarms of them are sometimes so numerous in Eastern countries, that they fly in the air like a succession of clouds, forming enormous compact bodies. But when the wind blows briskly, locusts being weak and feeble creatures, these swarms are often tossed, broken into separate masses, thrown one upon another, and driven over the sea, into which they fall when no longer able to sustain their flight.—See Exod. x. 13, 19. So powerless was the speaker in this psalm before his persecuting enemies. He was driven by them from place to place, without the power to offer any resistance. Hammond, who considers the psalm as having been composed by David when forced to flee from Jerusalem by the rebellion of his son Absalom, after referring to this explanation of the metaphor, observes: "Another possible way there is of understanding the resemblance. The locust is but a large sort of grasshopper, which hath no set abiding-place or nest, but leaps to and fro, roves about the field: so we have the 'running to and fro of locusts,' Isaiah xxxiii. 4. And this uncertain, unsettled condition of those creatures, may be proper also to express David's condition in his flight, when he had not where to lay his head, but wandered from place to place uncertainly. But the former, that is founded in the bands of locusts, is fitter to express David and the company with him, his weak fugitive army, than that which is founded in the manner of the single locust or grasshopper."

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principle, that of owing every thing to God's voluntary choice, upon which also he acknowledges his safety depends. Were it lawful for any one to boast of his virtues and merits, certainly David was not the man who was least entitled to do so; and, moreover, he was the representative of Christ, and of the whole Church. Hence it follows, that all our prayers will vanish in smoke, unless they are grounded upon the mercy of God. The case of Christ was indeed a peculiar one, inasmuch as it was by his own righteousness that he appeased the wrath of his Father towards us. As, however, his human nature was entirely dependant on the good pleasure of God, so it was his will, by his own example, to direct us to the same source. What can we do, seeing that the most upright among us is constrained to acknowledge that he is chargeable with the commission of much sin; surely we never can make God our debtor? It follows, therefore, that God, on account of the benignity of his nature, takes us under his protection; and that, because of the goodness of his mercy, he desires his grace may shine forth in us. In coming to God, we must always remember that we must possess the testimony of a good conscience, and must beware of harbouring the thought that we have any inherent righteousness which would render God our debtor, or that we deserve any recompense at his hands. For if, in the preservation of this short and frail life, God manifests the glory of his name and of his goodness, how much more ought all confidence in good works to be laid aside, when the subject-matter referred to is life heavenly and eternal? If, in the prolonging of my life for a short time on earth, his name is thereby glorified, by manifesting of his own accord towards me his benignity and liberality; when, therefore, having delivered me from the tyranny of Satan, he adopts me into his family, washes away my impurity in the blood of Christ, regenerates me by his Holy Spirit, unites me to his Son, and conducts me to the life of heaven,—then, assuredly, the more bountifully he treats me, the less should I be disposed to arrogate to myself any portion of the praise. How different a part does David act, who, in order to procure favour for himself, publishes his own poverty and misery? And as outward affliction is of no

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avail, unless a man, at the same time, be humbled, and his proud and rebellious spirit be subdued, the Psalmist here repeats, that his heart was wounded within him. From which we may learn, that God will be a physician to none, except to such as in the spirit of genuine humility send up their sighs and groans to him, and do not become hardened under their afflictions.

23. *I walk about as a shadow.* These are two very appropriate similitudes: to the first of them I formerly adverted in Psalm cii. 12; namely, that the afflicted person, and he who is almost lifeless, is very fitly compared to the shadow of the evening. At sunrise, or when he is shining in noon-day brightness, the constant shifting of the shadow is not so perceptible; but, towards sunset, the shadow flits before us during every moment that passes. By the other similitude, the transitory nature of all sublunary things is pointed out. For as the locusts are constantly skipping from one place to another, so David complains of his life being ever rendered uneasy by incessant persecution, so that no space was allowed him for repose; and this is similar to what he says in Psalm xi. 1, that he was compelled to flee like a sparrow, for which the fowler lays snares in all directions. In short, he mourns over his forlorn situation, that he could find no place of safety, and that, even among men, he could get no habitation. And, as in this psalm, he presents us with a picture of the whole Church, we need not be surprised if God try us, and arouse us from our lethargy, by an innumerable variety of events. Accordingly, Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 11, speaking of himself and others, says, that they have no certain dwelling-place; a description which is more or less applicable to all the children of God.

24. *My knees are become feeble.* Though David had the necessaries of life, yet he emaciated himself by voluntary abstinence, to which, as well as to prayer, he gave himself, and therefore we may regard this verse as expressive of his sorrow and sadness. We may also understand it as expressive of his having no relish for meat or drink, knowing, as we do, that

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persons who are in sorrow and sadness have no appetite for food; even life itself is burdensome to them. Should any one prefer restricting the interpretation to David's being in want of the necessaries of life, when he hid himself in the dens of wild beasts, to escape the fury of his enemies, and was then subjected to hunger and thirst, he may do so. It appears to me, however, that by this language he intends to point out the extreme anguish which he felt, because, with death staring him in the face, he loathed all food; and this is in accordance with the next clause, in which he says, *my flesh faileth of fatness;* because "a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones," (Prov. xvii. 22.) By the term, fatness, some understand delicacies; meaning that he was deprived of all that food which is pleasing to the palate. The more natural way is to consider it as denoting his becoming emaciated by reason of grief and fasting, inasmuch as the natural moisture was wasted. Another proof of his sad situation arises from this, that, according to what he states in Psalm xxii. 7, he was held in scorn by all. It is, indeed, a sad and bitter thing which God's children endure, when they are made to feel that the curse which he denounces against the transgressors of his law is directed against themselves; for the law says to the despisers of it, "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and laughing-stock," (Deut. xxviii. 37.) With this species of temptation David was assailed; and he declares that he was not only regarded as a condemned person, but also cruelly derided; God at the same time coming in for a share of it; for it is usual with the ungodly to conduct themselves with insolence and pride towards us when they see us oppressed under afflictions, and, at the same time, to rail at our faith and piety, because God renders us no help in our miseries.

26. *Help me, O Jehovah!* The prophet repeats his prayer, because the more we are assailed by the subtilty and deceit of Satan, the more necessary is it for us to strive more ardently, and display the greater boldness. We may, indeed, have the full assurance of God being propitious towards us, yet when he delays to manifest it, and when the ungodly slander us, it

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must be that various doubts which keep intruding themselves upon us arise in our minds. Hence, it is not without reason that David, in order that he might withstand such attacks, places himself under the protection of that God who, according to his mercy and goodness, helps his people in their time of need. He implores that deliverance may be extended to him, not by ordinary means, but by the peculiar and special display of God's power, so that his enemies may stand abashed, and not dare to open their mouths; and we know that God sometimes secretly grants succour to his servants, while, at other times, he stretches out his hand in such a visible manner, that the ungodly, though they shut their eyes, are constrained to acknowledge that there is divine agency connected with their deliverance. For as his enemies had exalted themselves against God, so it was his desire, after they shall have been subdued, to exult over them in the name of God. In cherishing this desire, he has no wish to procure for himself the renown of being valiant in war, but that God's power may be displayed, that no flesh may glory in his sight. The words may also be viewed as referring both to his deliverance from his enemies, and to his affliction; his desire being to attribute his deliverance mainly to the grace of God; because, in opposing the hand of God to fortune and to all human means of deliverance, it is plainly his intention that God should be recognised as the alone author of it. This deserves to be carefully considered by us, for however anxious we are to be delivered by the hand of God, yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who makes the manifestation of God's glory his chief end; that glory for which we ought to have a greater regard than for our own safety, because it is far more excellent. Whosoever then is desirous that the ungodly may be constrained to acknowledge the power of God, ought the more carefully to take heed to the help of God which in his own case he experiences; for it would be most absurd to point out the hand of God to others, if our minds have not recognised it.

28. *They shall curse, but thou shalt bless: when they arise, they shall be put to shame; but thy servant shall rejoice.*

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29. *Thy adversaries shall be clothed with shame, and covered with their own confusion, as with a garment.*
30. *I will praise Jehovah greatly with my mouth; and I will extol him in the midst of the multitude.*[1]
31. *Because he standeth at the right hand of the poor, to deliver his soul from condemnations.*[2]

28. *They shall curse.* Interpreters are divided in their opinions about the meaning of these words. One class would render them as expressive of a desire or wish: *Let them curse, provided that thou bless: let them arise, and be clothed with confusion.* Another class, and with them I readily agree, adopt the future tense of the indicative mood, *They shall curse, &c.* Should any prefer to understand the passage as indicating, on the part of the Psalmist, his resolution to suffer and submit to the curses of his enemies, I do not oppose their interpretation. In my opinion, however, those who view the words as a prayer, misinterpret them; because David, having already presented his petitions to God, and being secure in his favour, seems now rather to boast that their cursing will do him no harm; for Thou, says he, wilt bless me. By this means, he proves how little and how lightly he regarded the menaces of his enemies, though they might assail him by the poison of the tongue, and the power of the sword. From the example of David, let us learn to form the resolution of engaging God on our side, who can baffle all the designs of our enemies, and inspire us with courage to set at defiance their malice, wickedness, audacity, power, and fury.

And then, indeed, it is that the loving-kindness of God appears, when it banishes from our minds the fears which we entertain of the threatenings of the world. Therefore, relying upon the grace of God, boldly setting at nought the machinations and attacks of his enemies, believing that they could not prevail against God's blessing, David raises the shout of triumph even in the midst of the battle. This truth is still

[1] "En l'assemblee des grans."—*Fr.* "In the assembly of the great."
[2] "C'est, de ceux qui ont jugé et condamne son ame à la mort."—*Fr. marg.* "That is, from those who have judged and condemned his soul to death."

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more impressively inculcated in the succeeding clause of the verse: *Though they arise, yet shall they be put to shame.* By these words it is obviously his design to intimate that the ungovernable violence of his enemies is not yet subdued, but that he can endure all their fury and foam so long as the hand of God is stretched forth to maintain and defend him; and thus he animates and fortifies himself against all the pride of the world, and, at the same time, by his example emboldens all the faithful, so that they do not feel dejected even when the perverseness of their enemies seems to get the advantage over them, and to menace them with instant destruction. Cherishing such a hope, he trusts that, for the future, he shall be delivered from all his sorrows. Whence let us learn to bear patiently and meekly our trials, until the fit season and the full time, which God hath appointed, arrive for turning our weeping into joy. In the following verse he proceeds in the same strain of exultation, because, though he beholds the ungodly assuming a lofty air, yet, looking beyond the present state of things with the eye of faith, he entertains no doubt that God will frustrate all their designs, and pour contempt upon all their schemes.

30. *I will praise Jehovah greatly with my mouth.* These words clearly establish the truth of the observation I formerly made, that David does not pray God to curse his enemies, but, by the holy boldness of his faith, sets them at defiance; for he prepares to offer up a tribute of gratitude to God, as if he had already realized the object of his desire. The phrase, *with my mouth,* is not, as some erroneously suppose, superfluous, but is to be considered as a public acknowledgment, on his part, of his thanksgiving to God for the deliverance vouchsafed to him; as if he should say, I will, not only when alone and when no human eye beholds me, and in the inward recesses of my heart, meditate upon the great goodness which I have received from God, but also in the appointed sacrifice of praise will I declare publicly, before men, how much I am indebted to his grace. Agreeably to this meaning, he adds, *in the assembly of great,* or *of many men;* for the term רבים, *rabbim,* is susceptible of being ren-

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dered both ways. I prefer rendering it, *great men*, because it appears to me, that David refers to an assembly of men of notable and noble rank. He declares that he will acknowledge the goodness of God, not only in some obscure corner, but also in the great assembly of the people, and among governors and those of noble rank. In the celebration of God's praises, there can be no question that these must issue from the heart ere they be uttered by the lips; at the same time, it would be an indication of great coldness, and of want of fervour, did not the tongue unite with the heart in this exercise. The reason why David makes mention of the tongue only is, that he takes it for granted that, unless there be a pouring out of the heart before God, those praises which reach no farther than the ear are vain and frivolous; and, therefore, from the very bottom of his soul, he pours forth his heart-felt gratitude in fervent strains of praise; and this he does, from the same motives which ought to influence all the faithful—the desire of mutual edification; for to act otherwise would be to rob God of the honour which belongs to him.

Moreover, he also subjoins the form in which he rendered thanks; namely, *that God stood at the right hand of the poor*. By this language he intimates, that when God had apparently forsaken and abandoned him, and stood far from him, even then he was always near and ready to render him seasonable and needful help; and, assuredly, his poverty and affliction gave some reason for suspecting that he was forsaken of God, inasmuch as he then either withdrew or concealed his loving-kindness. Notwithstanding of this seeming departure, he acknowledges that, during his affliction and poverty, God never ceased to be present to render him assistance. In saying *that he was saved from the judges of his life*, he sets forth, in a still stronger light, the very trying situation in which he was placed; his having to deal with very formidable enemies, such as the king and the princes of the realm, who, proudly presuming upon their grandeur and greatness, and regarding his recovery hopeless, treated him as if he had been a dead dog. It is my firm conviction, that in this passage he complains both of the torturing cruelty of his

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enemies, and also that his character had been unjustly aspersed by calumny and reproach; for we know that he was borne down by the malignity and wickedness of those who, being invested with authority, boastingly, yet falsely, pretended that they wished to act as judges and as the executors of justice, which plausible pretexts they adopt as a cloak for their iniquity.

PSALM CX.

In this psalm David sets forth the perpetuity of Christ's reign, and the eternity of his priesthood; and, in the *first* place, he affirms, That God conferred upon Christ supreme dominion, combined with invincible power, with which he either conquers all his enemies, or compels them to submit to him. In the *second* place, he adds, That God would extend the boundaries of this kingdom far and wide; and, in the *third* place, That Christ, having been installed into the priestly office with all the solemnity of an oath, sustains the honours of that equally with those of his regal office. *Finally*, That this shall be a new order of priesthood, whose introduction shall put an end to the Levitical priesthood, which was temporary, and that it shall be everlasting.

¶ A Psalm of David.

Having the testimony of Christ that this psalm was penned in reference to himself, we need not apply to any other quarter for the corroboration of this statement; and, even supposing we neither had his authority, nor the testimony of the apostle, the psalm itself would admit of no other interpretation;[1] for although we should have a dispute with

[1] In Matth. xxii. 42-45, Christ applies this portion of Scripture to himself; and this application the Pharisees, before whom it was made, so far from disputing, at once admitted, as appears from their inability to answer our Lord's question, which was founded upon it; for had the psalm been differently interpreted by any party among the Jews, the Pharisees would unquestionably have taken advantage of such diversity of opinion, to escape from the difficulty in which they were placed by the question addressed to them. The Messianic interpretation of this psalm is also supported by the testimony of the apostles. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. i. 13) quotes the first verse, to prove Christ's superiority in dignity to angels, to whom Jehovah had never said, "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

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the Jews, the most obstinate people in the world, about the right application of it, we are able, by the most irresistible arguments, to compel them to admit that the truths here stated relate neither to David nor to any other person than the Mediator alone. It is acknowledged that the kingdom of Christ is typified in the person of David, but it cannot be asserted of him, or of any of his successors, that he should be a king whose dominion should be widely extended, and who, at the same time, was to be a priest, not according to the law, but according to the order of Melchizedek, and that for ever; for, at that time, no new and unusual priestly dignity could be instituted, without depriving the house of Levi of this peculiar honour. Besides, the perpetuity which is ascribed to the sacerdotal office cannot belong to any man, because, with the exception of the man Christ Jesus, this honour terminates immediately at the close of the short and uncertain course of the present life. But as these topics will be considered, more at large, in their proper place, it is sufficient that we have, at this time, briefly alluded to them.

1. *Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*
2. *Jehovah shall send out of Zion the sceptre of thy power: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*
3. *Thy people shall come with voluntary offerings, at the time of the assembling of thine army,*[1] *in beauty of holiness:*[2] *the dew of thy youth shall come to thee out of the womb from the morning.*

1. *Jehovah said to my Lord.*[3] What is here stated might

In Acts ii. 34, 35, Peter quotes the same passage, as prophetical of Christ's ascension into heaven. See also 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. vii. 17; Eph. i. 20, &c. The psalm is thus, beyond all controversy, a very clear prediction of the divinity, priesthood, victories, and triumph of the Messiah. We have so many Scriptural helps to its exposition, that we can be at no loss as to its meaning. Such also is the strength of the internal evidence, in support of its application to Christ, that although the Jews have taken a great deal of pains to wrest it to another sense, yet several of the Rabbins have been forced to acknowledge that it belongs to him.

[1] "Au temps d'assembler ton exercite."—*Fr.*

[2] Calvin, in pointing this verse, has very properly placed the colon after *holiness*, and not after *morning*, as in our English Bible.

[3] "*The* LORD *said unto my Lord.* Heb., 'Jehovah assuredly said unto my *Adon*,' which last word is used for *lord* in every variety of rank, from the master of a family to the sovereign of an empire. In its origin, this title seems similar to the Italian *cardinal*, which means primarily a hinge, as Adon does a socket; hence figuratively applied to executive magistrates, on whom the government *rests*, and public affairs *turn*."—*Williams.*

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to some extent be applied to the person of David, inasmuch as he neither ascended the royal throne illegally, nor did he find his way to it by nefarious artifices, nor was he raised to it by the fickle suffrages of the people, but it was by the direct authority of God that he reigned over Israel. It may be justly affirmed of all the kings of the earth, that they have been placed upon their thrones by the hand of God, for the kingdoms of this world are appointed by the decree of heaven, and "there is no power but of God," (Romans xiii. 1.) Besides, as this kingdom was altogether peculiar, it was the design of David to make a distinction between it and all other kingdoms. God indeed invests kings with authority, but they are not consecrated as David was, that like him, in consequence of the holy anointing oil, they might be elevated to the rank of Christ's vicegerents. In the eighty-second psalm they are called gods, because by the will of God they hold their position, and in some respects are his representatives, (all power being lodged in him;) but they are not clothed with that sacred majesty by which David was honoured to be a type of God's only begotten Son. Moreover, he justly observes that the kingdom was conferred upon him in a totally different manner from other earthly kings, who, while they acknowledge that it is by the grace of God they reign, yet, at the same time, do not consider that they are sustained by his power, but, on the contrary, imagine that they reign either by their own policy, by hereditary right, or by the kindness of fortune; and, therefore, in so far as it respects themselves, it must be affirmed, that they have no legitimate title to reign. And since they do not recognise the hand of God in what they derive from him, his command cannot be properly addressed to them. David, who was well aware that he was anointed by God to be king over Israel, and who maintained an obscure and retired position until summoned to assume the reins of government, shows good cause why he is not to be classed with the ordinary kings of the earth; meaning that he reigned by a Divine right. That the whole of what is stated in this verse cannot be entirely and exclusively applied to David, is very obvious from Christ's reply to the Pharisees, (Matth. xxii.

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44.) They having said that Christ was to be the son of David, he saith unto them, "How then doth David himself call him Lord?"

The objection started by the Jews, that Christ's reply was captious, is entirely frivolous, because David does not speak in his own name, but in that of the people. This objection is easily repelled. For even granting that this psalm was penned in name of the whole Church, yet as David himself constituted one of the number of the godly, and was a member of the body under the same head, he could not separate himself from that class, or be dissevered from this head; what is more, he could not compose this psalm for others without, at the same time, taking part with them in it. There is besides another thing deserving of notice, the assumption of the principle or maxim then generally admitted, that David spake by the spirit of prophecy, and consequently prophesied of the future reign of Christ. This principle of interpretation being admitted, it is plainly to be inferred that he had a reference to Christ's future manifestation in the flesh, because he is the sole and supreme Head of the Church. From which it also follows, that there is something in Christ more excellent than his humanity, on account of which he is called the Lord of David his father. This view is strengthened by what is stated in the second clause of the verse. Earthly kings may indeed be said to sit at God's right hand, inasmuch as they reign by his authority; here, however, something more lofty is expressed, in that one king is chosen in a peculiar manner, and elevated to the rank of power and dignity next to God, of which dignity the twilight only appeared in David, while in Christ it shone forth in meridian splendour. And as God's right hand is elevated far above all angels, it follows that he who is seated there is exalted above all creatures. We will not maintain that angels were brought down from their high estate to be put in subjection to David. What, then, is the result, but that by the spirit of prophecy Christ's throne is exalted far above all principalities in heavenly places? The simile is borrowed from what is customary among earthly kings, that the person who is seated at his right hand is said to be next to him, and hence the

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Son, by whom the Father governs the world, is by this session represented as metaphorically invested with supreme dominion.

Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.[1] By these words the prophet affirms that Christ would subdue all the opposition which his enemies in their tumultuous rage might employ for the subversion of his kingdom. At the same time, he intimates that the kingdom of Christ would never enjoy tranquillity until he had conquered his numerous and formidable enemies. And even should the whole world direct their machinations to the overthrow of Christ's royal throne, David here declares that it would remain unmoved and unmoveable, while all they who rise up against it shall be ruined. From this let us learn that, however numerous those enemies may be who conspire against the Son of God, and attempt the subversion of his kingdom, all will be unavailing, for they shall never prevail against God's immutable purpose, but, on the contrary, they shall, by the greatness of his power, be laid prostrate at Christ's feet. And as this prediction will not be accomplished before the last day, it must be that the kingdom of Christ will be assailed by many enemies from time to time until the end of the world; and thus by-and-bye it is said, *rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.* The particle *until* does not refer to that which may happen after the complete carnage of the enemies of Christ.[2] Paul certainly declares that he will then deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, which he received from him, (1 Cor. xv. 24;)

[1] The expression is borrowed from the Eastern custom of conquerors putting their feet upon the necks of their enemies. See Joshua x. 24.

[2] "*Until I make, &c.* It is remarked by Genebrard, that the particle עד is to be taken emphatically, as if it were equivalent to *etiam donec*, and signifies *continuity;* not the *exception* or *exclusion* of *future times.* Jehovah is, therefore, speaking in substance as follows:—'Reign with me even until *I make thy enemies thy footstool;* even at the time which seems opposed to thy kingdom, and when thy enemies appear to reign, that is, before I have prostrated thy enemies, and have caused them to make submission to thee. *After* this subjection of thy adversaries, it is unnecessary to say, Thou wilt continue to reign.' If this be not the force of the passage, then we must suppose that the reign of Christ will cease when he has completely subjugated the world; which is contrary to what we are taught elsewhere in Scripture. The particle is used in a similar manner in Ps. cxxiii. 3; Deut. vii. 24."—*Phillips.*

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but we are not to take these words as denoting that he shall cease to reign, and become, as it were, a private individual; we are to regard them as describing the manner of his reign, that is, that his Divine majesty will be more conspicuous. Moreover, in this passage he is speaking solely of the reprobate who fall under Christ's feet to their own ruin and destruction. All mankind are naturally opposed to Christ, and hence it is, that ere they be brought to yield a willing obedience to him, they must be subdued and humbled. This he does with regard to some of them whom he afterwards makes partakers with him in his glory; while he casts off others, so that they may remain for ever in their lost state.

2. *Jehovah shall send out of Zion the sceptre of thy power.* The Psalmist not only confirms, in different terms, what he stated above, but also adds, that Christ's kingdom shall be vastly extended, because God would make his sceptre stretch far and wide. David did indeed render not a few of the surrounding nations tributaries to him, but still his kingdom, when contrasted with other monarchies, was always confined within narrow limits. There is in the words an implied contrast, as if he had said, that Christ should not reign as King upon mount Zion only, because God would cause his power to extend to the remotest regions of the earth. And for this reason it is denominated *the sceptre of his power*;[1] and how astonishing was it, that though the whole world was leagued in opposition to Christ's kingdom, it yet continued to spread and prosper. In a word, David here animates the hearts of the godly against being dispirited by the foolhardy attempts on the part of those who presume to introduce discord and disorder into the kingdom of Christ; for he shows them that God will put forth his invincible power for the maintaining of the glory of his sacred throne. What time, then, our minds are agitated by various commotions, let us learn confidently to repose on this

[1] "*The rod of thy strength*, or *the sceptre of thy strength*, *i. e.*, thy powerful sceptre, the sceptre with which thou rulest thy powerful kingdom."—*Phillips.*

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support, that however much the world may rage against Christ, it will never be able to hurl him from the right hand of the Father. Moreover, as he does not reign on his own account, but for our salvation, we may rest assured that we will be protected and preserved from all ills under the guardianship of this invincible King. Doubtless our condition in this world is connected with many hardships; but as it is the will of God that Christ's kingdom should be encompassed with many enemies, and that too with the design of keeping us in a state of constant warfare, it becomes us to exercise patience and meekness; and assured of God's aid, boldly to set at nought the rage of the whole world. From this passage we are instructed as to the calling of the Gentiles. Because, if God had not told us in this place respecting the extension of Christ's kingdom, we would not this day have been classed among his people. But as the wall is broken down, (Ephes. ii. 14,) and the gospel promulgated, we have been gathered together into the body of the Church, and Christ's power is put forth to uphold and defend us.

3. *Thy people shall come.*[1] In this verse the Psalmist sets forth the honours of Christ's kingdom in relation to the number of his subjects, and their prompt and cheerful obedience to his commands. The Hebrew term, which he employs, frequently

[1] "'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' *Voluntaries*, a people of voluntarinesses or of liberalities, (as Ps. lxviii. 10;) that is, shall most freely, willingly, and liberally present themselves and their oblations to thee, as Judges v. 9; Acts xi. 41; Exod. xxv. 2; Rom. xii. 1; Ps. xlvii. 10; cxix. 108; Song vi. 11."—*Ainsworth.* "נדבות is literally *promptitudines, readinesses;* so that the term being plural and abstract, may be regarded as highly emphatic, as if the Psalmist said, *Thy people shall be very willing.* This noun also signifies *voluntary oblations.* Thus Luther has rendered it by *williglich opfern.* In this sense it is found in many passages, as Exod. xxxv. 29; xxxvi. 3; Deut. xxiii. 24, and several other places. It will be necessary, if this meaning be assigned to it here, to supply some such verb as יביא. The Psalmist, however, is evidently speaking of a battle, and, therefore, the admission of this meaning would be incongruous."—*Phillips.* "Since an army," says Rosenmüller, "is represented in this passage as called out to a warlike expedition, we cannot understand נדבות otherwise than as signifying a prompt and willing mind, in which sense we find it, Hosea xiv. 5, *ultro, voluntarily,* of his own accord, Ps. li. 14; Judges v. 2, 9." —*Messianic Psalms, Biblical Cabinet,* vol. xxxii. p. 271.

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denotes *voluntary oblations;* but, in the present case, it refers to the chosen people, those who are truly Christ's flock; declaring that they shall be a willing people, spontaneously and cheerfully consecrating themselves to his service. *At the time of the assembling of thine army,* that is to say, as often as there shall be a convening of solemn and lawful assemblies, or the king shall desire an account of his people; which may be expressed in French, *au jour des montres,—in the day of the review.* Others render it, *in the day of thy power;*[1] but the former is preferable, for when Christ shall wish to assemble his people, immediately they will yield a prompt obedience, without being forcibly constrained to it. Moreover, for the purpose of assuring us that this, in preference to all other kingdoms, was set apart by God for his peculiar services, it is added, *the beauties or honours of holiness,* thereby intimating, that all who become Christ's subjects will not approach him as they would do an earthly king, but as they would come into the presence of God himself, their sole aim being to serve God.

Out of the womb of the morning,[2] *&c.* It would not be for edification to recount all the interpretations which have been given of this clause, for when I have established its true and natural import, it would be quite superfluous to enter upon a refutation of others. There does not, indeed, appear to me any

[1] "I have rendered the words, ביום חילך, *in the day of thy power;* and I understand that day as referring to the time when, in consequence of Peter's exhortation, three thousand persons made profession of the Christian faith."—*Dante on the Messianic Psalms, Biblical Cabinet,* vol. xxxii. p. 318. With this corresponds the interpretation of Hammond: "The Messiah, in the former verses, is set upon his throne, for the exercise of his regal power, with a sword or sceptre in his hand; and, as such, he is supposed to rule in the world, to go out to conquer and subdue all before him. The army which he makes use of to this end is the college of apostles, sent out to *preach to all nations;* and the time of their thus preaching is here called יום חילך, 'the day of his power,' or 'forces,' or 'army.'" But Queen Elizabeth's translators understood the phrase in the same sense as Calvin, rendering it, "The people shall come willingly at the time of assembling thine army." In like manner, Rosenmüller reads, "*In the day of thy army;* that is," says he, "in the day when thou assemblest and leadest forth thine army. The word חיל, *militia,* is here used as in Deut. xi. 4; 2 Kings vi. 15, signifying military forces."—*Ibid.* vol. xxxii. p. 273.

[2] "*Des la matrice,* comme de, *l'estoille du matin.*"—*Fr.* "*Out of the womb,* as if from *or* out of *the star of the morning.*"

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reason to doubt that, in this place, David extols the Divine favour displayed in increasing the number of Christ's people; and hence, in consequence of their extraordinary increase, he compares the youth or race which would be born to him to the *dew*.[1] As men are struck with astonishment at seeing the earth moistened and refreshed with dew, though its descent be imperceptible, even so, David declares that an innumerable offspring shall be born to Christ, who shall be spread over the whole earth. The youth, therefore, which, like the dew-drops, are innumerable, are here designated *the dew of childhood* or *of youth*. The Hebrew term, ילדות, *yalduth*, is used as a collective noun, that is, a noun which does not point out a single individual only, but a community or society.[2] Should any wish to attach a more definite and distinct signification to the term, he may do so in the following manner: That an offspring, innumerable as the dew-drops of the morning, shall issue from his womb. The testimony of experience proves that there was good reason for uttering this prediction. The multitude who, in so short a time, have been gathered together and subjected to Christ's sway, is incredible; the more so, as this has been accomplished by the sound of the Gospel alone, and that, too, in spite of the formidable opposition of the whole world. Besides, it is not surprising that aged persons, who are recently converted to Christ, should be designated children newly born, because the spiritual birth, according to Peter, makes all the godly become as new-born babes, (1 Pet. ii. 2.) To the same purpose are the words of Isaiah, (liii. 10,) that Christ "shall see a seed whose days shall be prolonged;" and under his reign the Church has the promise of enjoying a season of incalculable fertility. What has been said will serve to account for the appellation given to the Church or children of God. And, assuredly, it is matter of surprise that there should be any,

[1] "Among the earliest Greek writers, dew seems to have been a figurative expression for the young of any animal. Thus, δροσος is used by Æschylus for an unfledged bird, (*Agamemn.* 145;) and ἑρση, by Homer, for a young lamb or kid, (*Od.* i. 222.)"—*Horsley.*

[2] "Qui ne se dit pas d'une personne seule, mais de quelque multitude et compagnie."—*Fr.*

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though the number may be few, gathered out of a world lying in ruins, and inhabited by the children of wrath; and it is still more surprising, that such vast multitudes are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ and by the word. At the same time, we would do well to bear in mind, that to execute God's commands promptly and cheerfully, and to be guided solely by his will, is the peculiar honour and privilege of his chosen; for Christ will recognise none as his people, except those who willingly take his yoke upon them, and come into his presence at the voice of his word. And that no one may imagine that eye-service is a proper discharge of his duty, the Psalmist very properly adds, that Christ will not be satisfied with mere external ceremony, but that he must be worshipped with true reverence, such as he himself instructs us to bring into the presence of God.

4. *Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent him,*[1] *Thou art a priest for ever, according to the manner of Melchizedek.*

4. *Jehovah hath sworn.* This verse is a satisfactory proof that the person here spoken of is none other than Christ. When the Jews, with the view of mystifying this prediction, render the term כֹּהֵן, *chohen, a prince,* their translation is at once feeble and frivolous. I acknowledge, indeed, that those of noble descent or of royal blood are in Hebrew denominated כֹּהֲנִים, *chohanim;* but would it have been saying any thing to the honour of Christ for David merely to give to him the title of a chief, which is inferior to that of royal dignity? Besides, what would be the import of saying that he was a prince for ever, and according to the manner of Melchizedek? There can be no question then, that the Holy Ghost here refers to something specific and peculiar, as dis-

[1] The addition, "and will not repent," is intended to indicate the absolute character of the oath, that it cannot be annulled or suspended in consequence of any altered circumstances; that no change of counsel or of conduct in the parties concerned shall cause any change in the divine purpose, so that it may be said, *Jehovah repented,* as he is said to have repented of creating man on observing the wickedness of the human race, (Gen. vi. 6.) A similar form of expression is elsewhere employed to express the immutability of what God declares or swears, (Numb. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29.)

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tinguishing and separating this king from all other kings. This, too, is the well known title with which Melchizedek was honoured by Moses, (Gen. xiv. 18.) I grant, indeed, that anciently among heathen nations kings were wont to exercise the priestly office; but Melchizedek is called "the priest of the most high God," in consequence of his devoutly worshipping the only true God. Among his own people, however, God did not permit the blending of these offices. Hence Uzziah, David's legitimate successor, was struck with leprosy because he attempted to offer incense to God, (2 Chron. xxvi. 21.) The circumstances connected with the lineage of David were vastly different from those relating to Melchizedek. What these are it is not difficult to ascertain, inasmuch as in this new King the holy office of the priesthood shall be united with the crown and the throne. For assuredly the imperial majesty was not so conspicuous in such an obscure prince as Melchizedek, as on that account to warrant his being held out as an example above all others. Salem, the sole seat of his throne, and where he reigned by sufferance, was at that time a small obscure town, so that with regard to him there was nothing deserving of notice saving the conjunction of the crown and the priesthood. Ambitious of procuring greater reverence for their persons, heathen kings aspired after the honour of the sacerdotal office; but it was by divine authority that Melchizedek was invested with both these functions.

All dubiety as to this being the meaning of David ought to be banished from our minds by the authority of the Apostle. And although the Jews may maintain the contrary as obstinately as they please, yet reason manifestly declares that the *beauty of holiness*, to which I formerly adverted, is here very clearly described. To this a decisive and peculiar mark is appended, which elevates Christ above all other kings with regard to the dignity of the priesthood, and which at the same time tends to point out the difference between his priesthood and that of Levi. In connection with his sacerdotal office, mention is made of *God's oath*, who was not wont to mingle his venerable name with matters of minor importance; but, on the contrary, to teach us by his own example to swear deliberately and reverently, and never unless

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in weighty and important matters. Admitting, then, that God had sworn that the Messiah would be the prince and governor of his people, according as Melchizedek was, this would have been nothing else than an unbecoming profanation of his name. When, however, it is quite apparent that something unusual and peculiar was denoted in this place, we may therefore conclude that the priesthood of Christ is invested with great importance, seeing that it is ratified by the oath of God. And, in fact, it is the very turning point upon which our salvation depends; because, but for our reliance on Christ our Mediator, we would be all debarred from entering into God's presence. In prayer, too, nothing is more needful for us than sure confidence in God, and therefore he not only invites us to come to him, but also by an oath hath appointed an advocate for the purpose of obtaining acceptance for us in his sight. As for those who shut the door against themselves, they subject themselves to the guilt of impeaching him with being a God of untruth and of perjury. It is in this way that the Apostle argues the disannulling of the Levitical priesthood; because, while that remained entire, God would not have sworn that there should be a new order of priesthood unless some change had been contemplated. What is more, when he promises a new priest, it is certain that he would be one who would be superior to all others, and would also abolish the then existing order.

Some translate the term דִּבְרָתִי, *diberathi, according to my word*,[1] an interpretation which I am not disposed entirely to reject, inasmuch as David would be represented as affirming that the priesthood of Melchizedek is founded upon the call and commandment of God. But as the letter י, *yod*, is frequently redundant, I, in common with the majority of interpreters, prefer translating it simply *manner*. Moreover, as not a few of the fathers have misapprehended the comparison between Christ and Melchizedek, we must learn from the Apostle what that resemblance is; from which will be readily seen the error

[1] "עַל דִּבְרָתִי. Secundum meam constitutionem, (*q. d.*,) Not according to the *Levitical order*, but according to *my appointment*, the true Melchizedek. See Heb. vii."—*Goode's New Version of the Book of Psalms, with Notes.*

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into which they fell respecting it. For can there be any thing more absurd than to overlook all the mysteries about which the Spirit, by the mouth of the Apostle, hath spoken, and attend only to such as he has omitted? Such persons argue solely about the bread and wine, which they maintain were offered both by Melchizedek and Christ. But Melchizedek offered bread and wine, not as a sacrifice to God, but to Abraham as a repast to refresh him on his march. In the holy Supper there is not an offering of bread and wine as they erroneously imagine, but a mutual participation of it among the faithful. As to the passage under review, the similitude refers principally to the perpetuity of his priesthood, as is obvious from the particle לעולם, *leolam*, that is to say, *for ever*. Melchizedek is described by Moses as if he were a celestial individual; and, accordingly, David, in instituting a resemblance between Christ and him, designs to point out the perpetuity of his priestly office. Whence it follows, (a point which is handled by the Apostle,) that as death did not intercept the exercise of his office, he has no successor. And this circumstance demonstrates the accursed sacrilege of the Popish mass; for, if the Popish priests will assume the prerogative of effecting a reconciliation between God and men, they must of necessity denude Christ of the peculiar and distinguishing honour which his Father has conferred upon him.

5. *The Lord at thy right hand*[1] *hath broken in pieces kings in the day of his wrath.*

[1] "*The Lord at thy right hand.* In this psalm it is evident, verse 1, that יהוה is the title of God the Father, and so again, verse 4, and אדני of the Messiah God the Son, in respect of that dignity, and dominion, and regal power, to which he was to be exalted at his ascension, that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' This is expressed, verse 1, by his 'sitting at God's right hand,' for which the Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 25, reads, 'It must be that he reign.' By this it is evident that, in this verse, 'The Lord at thy right hand,' must be understood of the Messiah instated in his regal power at the *right hand* of his Father, and not of the Father as his παραστάτης, to back and help him, as Psalm xvi. 8, and elsewhere, the phrase is used. For of the Son thus exalted we know it is that we read John v. 22, that 'the Father has committed all judgment to the Son.' Agreeable to which it is that this 'Adonai,' or 'Lord at Jehovah's right hand here, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath;' *i. e.*, shall act revenges most severely on the opposers of his kingdom; which revenges, in the New Testament, are peculiarly

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6. *He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill all with ruins; he shall break the head over a great country.*
7. *He shall drink of the torrent in the way, and therefore shall he elevate his head on high.*

5. *The Lord at thy right hand.* In these words David celebrates the dreadful nature of that power which Christ possesses for the dispersion and destruction of his enemies; and by this means he affirms, that though encompassed by bands of deadly foes, yet their malignant attempts would not prevent God from upholding the King whom he has set up. It is proper to consider the expression, *in the day of his wrath*, by which we are instructed patiently to endure the cross, if it happen that God, for a time, conceals himself during the prevalence of the cruelty and fury of enemies; for he knows well when the full and fit season arrives for executing vengeance upon them. Next, he invests Christ with power over the nations, and the people of uncircumcised lips; meaning, that he was not chosen King to reign over the inhabitants of Judea only, but also to keep under his sway distant nations, agreeably to what was predicated of him in Psalm ii. 8. And because, in all parts of the earth, as well as in the confines of Judea, there would be many rebellious and disobedient persons, he adverts also to their destruction; thus intimating, that all who should set themselves in opposition to Christ, must be made to fall before him, and their obstinacy be subdued.

7. *He shall drink.* Not a few interpreters, in my opinion, expound this verse in a very harsh manner: that the carnage would be so great, as to cause the blood of the slain to flow in torrents, out of which Christ, the Conqueror, might

attributed to Christ, and called 'the coming of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds, coming with his angels, and the approaching or coming of his kingdom.'"—*Hammond.* In this 5th verse the Psalmist makes a sudden apostrophe to Jehovah. Horsley is much inclined to indulge in a conjecture, which Dr Kennicott, too, seems to have entertained, that the word יהוה, *Jehovah*, has been lost out of the text after the original word for *at thy right hand*; and that the passage should run thus: "The Lord at thy right hand, O Jehovah!"

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drink till he was satiated.[1] Akin to this is the exposition of those who would have it to be a figurative representation of misery and grief, and thus descriptive of the many afflictions to which Christ was liable during this transitory life. The similitude seems rather to be drawn from the conduct of brave and powerful generals, who, when in hot pursuit of the enemy, do not suffer themselves to be diverted from their purpose by attending to luxuries; but, without kneeling down, are content to quench their thirst by drinking of the stream which they are passing. It was in this way that Gideon found out the brave and warlike soldiers; regarding such as kneeled down to drink as destitute of courage, he sent them back to their homes, Judges vii. 5. It therefore appears to me that David figuratively attributes military prowess to Christ, declaring that he would not take time to refresh himself, but would hastily drink of the river which might come in his way.[2] This is designed to strike his enemies with terror, intimating to them the rapid approach of impending destruction. Should any one be disposed to ask, Where then is that spirit of meekness and gentleness with which the Scripture elsewhere informs us he shall be endued? Isaiah xlii.

[1] This opinion is held by Michaelis and Doederlein. But although a fearful carnage of God's and his people's enemies is sometimes poetically described by His arrows being made drunk with blood, Deut. xxxii. 42; and as producing a stream of blood, in which his people, victorious over them, might dip or wash their feet, as in Psalm lxviii. 24; yet neither He nor they are said to *drink* such *blood*. There is a great difference between this latter and the two preceding metaphors; and we cannot think that the idea of drinking human blood, much less of making God drink it, would have entered the mind of any Israelite. The idea is abhorrent to human nature, and must have appeared particularly shocking to the Jews, who were strictly prohibited by the laws of Moses from eating even the blood of beasts.

[2] Similar is the opinion of Grotius. He regards the words as containing a description of a strenuous and active warrior, whom no obstacle can prevent from prosecuting victory with the utmost ardour; "who," to use his own language, "when pursuing the enemy, does not seek for places of entertainment, that he may refresh himself with wine, but is contented with water, which he takes hastily in passing; and whenever he can find it, not only from a river, but from a torrent." "Schnurrer," says Rosenmüller, "seems to have perceived the true meaning of the verse, which he gives in the following words:—'Though fatigued with the slaughter of his enemies, yet will he not desist; but, having refreshed himself with water taken from the nearest stream, will exert his renovated strength in the pursuit of the routed foe.'"—*Messianic Psalms*, p. 284.

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2, 3; lxi. 1, 2; I answer, that, as a shepherd is gentle towards his flock, but fierce and formidable towards wolves and thieves; in like manner, Christ is kind and gentle towards those who commit themselves to his care, while they who wilfully and obstinately reject his yoke, shall feel with what awful and terrible power he is armed. In Psalm ii. 9, we saw that he had in his hand an iron sceptre, by which he will beat down all the obduracy of his enemies; and, accordingly, he is here said to assume the aspect of cruelty, with the view of taking vengeance upon them. Wherefore it becomes us carefully to refrain from provoking his wrath against us by a stiff-necked and rebellious spirit, when he is tenderly and sweetly inviting us to come to him.

PSALM CXI.[1]

The title to this psalm supplies the place of an argument; and, that others may be induced to engage in the praises of God, the Psalmist points out the manner of doing so by his own example. Then he gives

[1] This and the subsequent psalms, to the 119th, are supposed to have been sung by the Jews at the celebration of the Passover; and the subject-matter of them was peculiarly adapted to such a purpose. "From the 111th to the 118th psalm, inclusive," says Jebb, in his recent work on the Psalms, "we find very interesting marks of a ceremonial which, tradition asserts, was observed by the Jews at the eating of the Passover, namely, the singing of the Gospel Hallel—that hymn, in all likelihood, which our blessed Lord sang with his disciples after the Last Supper. Dr Lightfoot informs us that there is considerable discrepancy of opinion among the Jews as to what psalms constituted the Greater Hallel; the various opinions extending or contracting its range from the 113th to the 137th psalm. As usual, these traditions are uncertain and ill defined, and have more respect to the arbitrary dicta of the Rabbins than to the internal evidence of Holy Scripture. Let us now examine this evidence. In the first place, we are to remark, that all the psalms (except the 114th and 118th) which precede the 119th, have *Hallelujah* (that is, Praise ye the Lord) either prefixed or subjoined, or both, while those which are without this burden are in evident connection; the 119th as evidently beginning a new series. In the absence, then, of any consistent testimony, it seems fair to assume, that this group of psalms formed the Greater Hallel, the sentiment they contain being singularly applicable to the festival,—to the great deliverance from Egypt, which it celebrated, and to the second delivery from Babylon, which so strongly resembled it. According to Dr Lightfoot, the 113th and 114th psalms

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a short account of the manifold benefits which, in olden times, he conferred upon the faithful, and is daily conferring upon them. The psalm is composed in alphabetical order, each verse containing two letters. The first verse begins with א, *aleph*, while the letter ב, *beth*, is placed at the commencement of the next half of the verse. The last two verses only are not divided into hemistiches; but each of these has three letters. If, however, any one will closely examine the contents, he will find that this has occurred through mistake or inadvertence; for if we make these two verses into three,[1] the construction of the sentences corresponds very well one with another; and, consequently, the transcribers have erred in not attending to the prophet's distinction.

1. *Praise ye Jehovah.*[2] (א, aleph,) *I will praise Jehovah with my whole heart,* (ב, beth,) *in the congregation and assembly of the just.*
2. (ג, gimel,) *The works of Jehovah are great,* (ד, daleth,) *sought out of all who have a desire to them.*
3. (ה, he,) *His work is beautiful and magnificent:* (ו, vau,) *and his justice endureth for ever.*
4. (ז, zain,) *He hath caused his marvellous works to be remembered:* (ח, cheth,) *Jehovah is compassionate and merciful.*

1. *I will praise Jehovah.* The best and most efficient method of inculcating the performance of any duty is to be exemplary; and, accordingly, we find that the prophet, in the present instance, sets himself for an example, to lead others to engage in the celebration of God's praises. His resolution

were sung at one period of the feast, at the second cup; and after the fourth cup, the other psalms, namely, the 115th to the 118th, inclusive; and here the feast ordinarily ended. They thus held the place of grace before or after meat; and this division is very consistent, the latter psalms being more evidently Eucharistical."—*Jebb's Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations*, vol. ii. pp. 269-271.

[1] "These two verses," says Dr Geddes, "might just as well have made three, and then the whole of both psalms would be regular." According to Jerome, this is the first psalm that is *exactly* alphabetical, the rest of this description, which precede it, being only nearly so.

[2] The Hebrew for *Praise ye Jehovah* is *Hallelujah*. This is probably the *title*, and no part of the psalm itself. The alphabetical construction of the poem seems to confirm this opinion. It is *acrostic*, and begins with *aleph*, and each succeeding hemistich commences with the other letters of the alphabet in order; but were *Hallelujah*, which begins with the fifth letter of the alphabet, answering to our H, the first word of the psalm, that would destroy its perfectly alphabetical character.

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to praise God consists of two parts; that he would celebrate God's praises unfeignedly, with all his heart, and that he would do it publicly, in the assembly of the faithful. He very properly begins with heart-praise, because it is much better to praise in secret, and when no one is conscious of it, than to lift up our voice, and shout forth his praises with feigned lips. At the same time, the person who, in secret, pours out his heart in grateful emotions towards God, will also set forth his praises in swelling strains, otherwise God would be deprived of one half of the honour which is due to him. The prophet then determines to praise God with the whole heart, that is, with an upright and honest heart; not that he engages to come up to the full measure of his duty, but he declares that he would not be like the hypocrites, who, coldly and with a double heart, or rather guilefully and perfidiously, employ their lips only in the praises of God. This is a point worthy of notice, lest any should be discouraged, in consequence of not being able to cherish the hope of attaining to that perfection of heart which is so desirable; for however defective our praises may be, they may nevertheless be acceptable to God, provided only we strive unfeignedly to render unto him this act of devotion. We come now to the other part of his resolution, in which he says he would proclaim the praises of God before men; for although the Hebrew term סוד, *sod*, denotes a private assembly,[1] yet I think that, in this passage, he employs two words of synonymous import. At the same time, should any one be inclined to take a more refined view of the passage, he may do so if he please. He says, *in the congregation of the just*, because the principal object for which holy assemblies are convened,

[1] "Aben Ezra and others think that עדה is put in opposition to סוד, which denotes a more secret assembly; and so the verse, they say, means, in substance, as follows: 'I will praise the Lord with all my heart, both privately and publicly.' This, however, I think can scarcely be the sense: it is much more likely that סוד is here employed to express a congregation of Israelites; because the rest of the world was excluded from such assembly, and so far it partook of the character of *private* or *secret*. This is the view taken by Luther, whose paraphrase of this verse is as follows: 'I thank the Lord here in this public assembly, where we (Israelites) meet one another as in private counsel, and where no heathen nor strangers can be present.'"—*Phillips*.

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is to afford the worshippers of God an opportunity of presenting to him sacrifices of praise, agreeably to what is stated in Psalm lxv. 1, "Praise waits for thee, O Jehovah! in Zion."

2. *The works of Jehovah are great.* He now proceeds to inform us that there are abundant materials for praising God, supplied by his works, to which at present he makes only a general reference, and which he, subsequently, defines more explicitly in relation to the government of the Church. The magnitude of God's works is a subject which, generally, eludes the observation of men, and, therefore, few of them are acquainted with it. This ignorance the prophet ascribes to the indifference and ingratitude of men, comparatively few of whom condescend to notice the great wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, which shine forth in these works. Expositors are divided in their sentiments about the second clause of the verse. Some translate it, *sought out for all their delights;* and, indeed, the Hebrew term חפץ, *chaphets*, signifies *good pleasure;* but as this is too harsh an interpretation of the word, it is better to understand it as an adjective, expressing the idea of *loving* or *desiring.* As to the participle, *sought out*, which, according to the Hebrew verb, דרש, *darash*, properly denotes, *to search with diligence*, we yet find that the works of Jehovah are, in this place, called דרושים, *derushim*, that is, *perceived or found out.* Hence, in Isaiah lxv. 1, it is said, "I was found of them who sought me not." I must, however, not lose sight of the prophet's design, namely, that in consequence of so few applying themselves to the study of the works of God, he teaches us that that is the reason why so many are blind amidst a flood of light; for, when he says that the excellency of the works of God is known to all who desire it, he means that none are ignorant of it, except such as are wilfully blind, or rather, malignantly and contemptuously quench the light which is offered to them. We must, however, attend to the means which we possess for arriving at the knowledge of these works, because we know, that as long as the faithful are on earth, their understandings are dull and weak, so that they cannot penetrate the mysteries, or comprehend the height of the works of God.

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But, incomprehensible as is the immensity of the wisdom, equity, justice, power, and mercy of God, in his works, the faithful nevertheless acquire as much knowledge of these as qualifies them for manifesting the glory of God; only it becomes us to begin the study of his works with reverence, that we may take delight in them, contemptible though they be in the estimation of the reprobate, who treat them with impious scorn. The LXX. having rendered it, *sought out in all his wills*, Augustine has therefore taken occasion, with philosophic finesse, to ask, How can there be, or, at least, appear to be, a plurality of wills in God? And it is indeed a pleasing consideration, that though God manifest his will in his law, nevertheless there is another secret purpose by which he is guided in the wonderful management of human affairs. This doctrine, however, is foreign to the exposition of this passage.

3. *His work is beautiful.* Others render it *splendour.* The meaning of the clause is this, That every act of God is réplete with glorious majesty. In the following part of the verse he specifies more clearly in what this beauty and magnificence consist, by stating that *the justice of God* is everywhere conspicuous. It is not the design of God to furnish us with such a display of his power and sovereignty in his works, as might only fill our minds with terror, but he also gives us a display of his justice in a manner so inviting as to captivate our hearts. This commendation of the works and ways of God is introduced in opposition to the clamour and calumny of the ungodly, by which they impiously endeavour, to the utmost extent of their power, to disfigure and deface the glory of the works of God. In the next verse, he more especially extols the wonderful works in which God has principally set forth his power. *To cause his marvellous works to be remembered*, is equivalent to the doing of works worthy of being remembered, or the renown of which shall continue for ever.[1] And having above called upon us to

[1] "זכר עשה. He hath made a memorial for himself in his wonderful works. זכר, the same as זכרון in Numb. xvii. 5. So the LXX., in

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contemplate his justice, now, in like manner, and almost in like terms, he celebrates the grace and mercy of God, principally in relation to his works, because that justice which he displays in the preservation and protection of his people, issues from the source of his unmerited favour which he bears towards them.

5. (ט, teth,) *He hath given a portion to them that fear him:* (י, yod,) *he will remember his covenant for ever.*
6. (כ, caph,) *He hath declared to his people the power of his works,* (ל, lamed,) *to give the heritage of the heathen to them.*
7. (מ, mem,) *The works of his hands are truth and judgment;* (נ, nun,) *all his statutes are true.*
8. (ס, samech,) *They are established for ever,* (ע, ain,) *and are done in truth and righteousness.*

5. *He hath given a portion to them that fear him.* The Church being a mirror of the grace and justice of God, what the prophet said respecting them is here expressly applied to her; not that he designs to treat of the justice of God, in general, but only of that which he peculiarly displays towards his own people. Hence he adds, that God's care of his people is such as to lead him to make ample provision for the supply of all their wants. The word טֶרֶף, *tereph*, which we have translated *portion*, is frequently taken for *a prey*:[1] others render it *meat;* but I rather choose to render it *portion*, in which sense it is taken in Prov. xxx. 8, and xxxi. 15; as if he should say, that God had given his people all that was needful, and that, considered as a portion, it was large

Exod. xvii. 14, render זכר by ὄνομα, *name;* accordingly, זכר עשה may signify, *He hath made himself a name; i. e.*, His wonderful works will exist as memorials of his name."—*Phillips.*

[1] "*Given meat*—Heb., 'Prey;' *i. e.*, food. Some think this refers to the *manna* rained upon Israel in the wilderness; we should rather think, to the quails. See Ps. cv. 40."—*Williams.* "טרף. This word is usually translated *prey*, and the passage is thought, by some, to refer to the spoiling of the Egyptians by the Israelites, mentioned in Exod. xii. 36. It is, however, more probable that טרף signifies here *food*, and that allusion is made to the manna with which the children of Israel were fed in the wilderness. See Prov. xxxi. 15; Mal. iii. 10. The first hemistich is the consequence of what is stated in the second; *i. e.*, *because* God remembered his covenant, *therefore* he gave food to them who fear him."—*Phillips.*

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and liberal; for we know that the people of Israel were enriched, not in consequence of their own industry, but by the blessing of God, who, like the father of a family, bestows upon his household every thing necessary for their subsistence. In the following clause of the verse, he assigns as the reason for his care and kindness, his desire of effectually demonstrating that his covenant was not null and void. And here it must be carefully observed, that if, in former times, and from a respect to his gracious covenant, he manifested so great kindness towards the people of Israel, in like manner, the goodness which we receive from him is the result of our adoption into his family; and because God is never weary in showing kindness to his people, he says that the remembrance of his covenant shall never be effaced. Moreover, as he daily and constantly loads us with his benefits, so our faith must, in some measure, correspond with it: it must not fail, but must rise above life and death.

The next verse is subjoined, by way of exposition, for the purpose of showing that God, in bestowing upon his people the heritage of the heathen, had manifested to them the power of his works. He does indeed employ the term *show*, but he means a true showing; because the possession of the Holy Land was not acquired by mere human power, but it was given to them by Divine power, and through the working of many miracles; and thus God, as it were, openly testified to the descendants of Abraham with what incomparable power he is invested. It is on this account that he sets up the people of Israel as a match for so many other nations, who would assuredly never have vanquished so many enemies, unless they had been sustained from on high.

7. *The works of his hands.* In the first clause of the verse he exclaims that God is known to be faithful and upright in his works, and then he goes on to extol the same truth and rectitude as pervading the doctrine of the law; the amount of which is, that a beautiful harmony characterises all the sayings and doings of God, because every where he shows himself to be just and faithful. We have a memorable proof of this fact in the redemption of his ancient people.

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Yet I doubt not, that, under the term, *works*, the prophet comprehends the constant government of the Church; because God daily and unceasingly shows that he is just and true, and unweariedly pursues the same course. Among men it is reckoned to be of more importance for one to be found just in practice than in profession; yet, as the doctrine of the law was the very life and safety of the people, the prophet very properly, and in several expressions, dwells upon the sentiment contained in the second clause of the verse; saying, *all his statutes are true, they are established for ever, and are drawn up in perfect accordance with the strict law of truth and equity.* And assuredly, but for God's having kept the people united to him by the sacred chain of the law, the fruit of their redemption would have been very small, and even that benefit would have soon been lost by them. We ought to observe, then, that this subject is brought prominently forward in this place; because, in attesting the eternal love of God, it became the means of imparting life.

9. (פ, phe,) *He sent redemption to his people;* (צ, tzaddi,) *he hath commanded his covenant for ever:* (ק, koph,) *holy and terrible is his name.*

10. (ר, resh,) *The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom:* (ש, schin,) *good understanding have all they who do these things:* (ת, tau,) *his praise endureth for ever.*

9. *He sent redemption to his people.* What he had already stated is here repeated in different words. And as the deliverance of his people was the commencement of their salvation, it is first introduced; next is subjoined its confirmation in the law, by reason of which it comes to pass that God's adoption could never fail. For though, long prior to this, God had established his covenant with Abraham, which also was the occasion of the redemption of the people; yet what is here mentioned refers exclusively to the law, by which the covenant was ratified, never to be disannulled. The amount is, that, in the deliverance of the people, God did not act the part of a beneficial father, merely for a day, but that, in the promulgation of the law, he also established

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his grace, that the hope of eternal life might continue for ever in the Church. Moreover, you must attend carefully to what I have elsewhere cautioned you against, and to which I shall advert more at length on Psalm cxix., where the law is spoken of, That the commandments must not be taken always abstractly, for the Holy Spirit, in an especial manner, refers to the promises which are in Christ, by which God, in gathering his chosen people to himself, hath begotten them again to eternal life.

10. *The fear of Jehovah.* Having treated of the kindness of God, and paid a well-merited tribute to the law, the prophet goes on to exhort the faithful to reverence God, and be zealous in the keeping of the law. In calling the *fear of God, The beginning* or *source of wisdom*, he charges with folly those who do not render implicit obedience unto God. As if he should say, They who fear not God, and do not regulate their lives according to his law, are brute beasts, and are ignorant of the first elements of true wisdom. To this we must carefully attend; for although mankind generally wish to be accounted wise, almost all the world lightly esteem God, and take pleasure in their own wicked craftiness. And as the very worst of men are reputed to be superior to all others in point of wisdom; and, puffed up with this confidence, harden themselves against God, the prophet declares all the wisdom of the world, without the fear of God, to be vanity or an empty shadow. And, indeed, all who are ignorant of the purpose for which they live are fools and madmen. But to serve God is the purpose for which we have been born, and for which we are preserved in life. There is, therefore, no worse blindness, no insensibility so grovelling, as when we contemn God, and place our affections elsewhere. For whatever ingenuity the wicked may possess, they are destitute of the main thing, genuine piety. To the same effect are the words which immediately follow, *a good understanding have all they who keep God's commandments.* There is great emphasis upon the qualifying adjunct טוֹב, *tob;* because the prophet, in inveighing against the foolish opinion to which we have already adverted, tacitly condemns those who delight

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in their own wicked craftiness. His meaning is, I admit, that they are usually deemed wise who look well to their own interests, who can pursue a temporising policy, who have the acuteness and artifice of preserving the favourable opinion of the world, and who even practise deception upon others. But even were I to grant that this character belongs to them, yet is their wisdom unprofitable and perverse, because true wisdom manifests itself in the observance of the law. Next he substitutes the *keeping of God's commandments* for the fear of God. For though all men, without exception, boast that they fear God, yet nothing is more common than for them to live in the neglect of his law. Hence the prophet very properly inculcates upon us the voluntary assumption of his yoke, and submission to the regulations of his word, as the most satisfactory evidence of our living in the fear of God. The term *beginning*[1] has misled some, leading them to imagine that the fear of God was denominated the entrance of wisdom, as it were the alphabet, because it prepares men for true piety. Such an opinion is scarcely deserving of notice, seeing that, in Job xxviii. 28, it is called "wisdom." In this passage *fear* is not to be understood as referring to the first or elementary principles of piety, as in 1 John iv. 18, but is comprehensive of all true godliness, or the worship of God. The conclusion of the psalm requires no explanation; it being the object of the prophet simply to inculcate upon the faithful, that nothing is more profitable for them, than to spend their lives in the celebration of the praises of God.

[1] "*The beginning*,—the word, so translated, also signifies *the prime, the chief part, the perfection;* a sense which it may very well bear in this place: comp. Deut. x. 12; Job xxviii. 28; Prov. i. 7, ix. 10."—*Cresswell.* "ראשית. This word may signify, the first in time, and so it may denote the foundation of any thing; hence the meaning of the Psalmist here is, that the foundation of all wisdom is the fear of the Lord. But ראשית has also the sense of being *first* in *dignity*, as well as in order of time; thus ראשית חכמה, *wisdom is the chief thing*, Prov. iv. 7. Here it may be understood in the same manner; *i. e.*, the fear of the Lord is the chief wisdom."—*Phillips.*

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PSALM CXII.

As the majority of mankind expect to prosper by evil deeds, and as they generally endeavour to enrich themselves by plunder, fraud, and every species of injustice, the prophet enumerates the blessings of God which attend those who worship him in purity, in order that we may know that, in aiming at a life of piety and morality, we shall not lose our reward.[1]

1. *Praise ye Jehovah. Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah; he will greatly delight in his commandments.*
2. *His seed shall be powerful in the earth :*[2] *the generation of the righteous shall be blessed.*
3. *Wealth and riches shall be in his house : and his righteousness endureth for ever.*

1. *Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah.* Although the prophet begins with an exhortation, he has, as I have already pointed out, something farther in view, than simply the calling upon the faithful to praise God. To practise wickedness, and perpetrate injustice, is, in all quarters, accounted a great happiness; and, although integrity may be occasionally praised, nevertheless, there is scarcely one among a hundred who pursues it, because all imagine that they will be miserable unless, by one means or another, they seize as booty every thing which comes in their way. In opposition to this, the prophet tells us that more advantage is to be expected from God's paternal regard, than from the inflicting of every species of injury, and the perpetrating of every kind of injustice in our power; and by setting before us the certain hope of reward, he calls us back to the practice of equity and beneficence. The following is the analysis which I give of the verse: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth himself in his commandments;* and thus, by the second clause

[1] This psalm is also acrostic or alphabetical; and the subject of it being only an enlargement upon the last verse of the preceding, as Muis and others have observed, the same author, it is not improbable, composed both.

[2] "*In the earth*, or rather, with Green, *in the land:* as it seems to mean *the land* of Israel, to which the promise of temporal blessings was limited." —*Dimock.*

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of the verse, the prophet specifies in what the fear of God consists. And that the addition of this explanatory clause is called for, is quite apparent from what we remarked towards the conclusion of the preceding psalm. For, while the law is boldly contemned by mankind, yet nothing is more common than to pretend that they fear God. Such impiety is well refuted by the prophet, when he acknowledges none as belonging to the worshippers of God, but he who endeavours to keep his law. The Hebrew verb חפץ, *chaphets*, is rather emphatical, which is, as it were, to *take his pleasure*, and I have rendered *to delight himself*. For the prophet makes a distinction between a willing and prompt endeavour to keep the law, and that which consists in mere servile and constrained obedience. We must, therefore, cheerfully embrace the law of God, and that, too, in such a manner, that the love of it, with all its sweetness, may overcome all the allurements of the flesh, otherwise, mere attention to it will be unavailing. Hence a man cannot be regarded as a genuine observer of the law, until he has attained to this—that the delight which he takes in the law of God renders obedience agreeable to him. I now resume the consideration of the passage at large. The prophet, in affirming that the worshippers of God *are happy*, guards us against the very dangerous deception which the ungodly practise upon themselves, in imagining that they can reap a sort of happiness, I know not what, from doing evil.

2. *His seed shall be powerful.* For the purpose of confirming the statement which he advanced respecting the happiness of the man that fears Jehovah and takes delight in his commandments, the prophet enumerates the tokens of God's loving-kindness, which he is wont to bestow upon his worshippers. And, in the first place, he says that God's fatherly kindness is not confined to their own persons, it also extends to their posterity: agreeably to what is said in the law, "I am merciful to a thousand generations, towards them that love me and keep my commandments," Exod. xxxiv. 7. And in Psalm ciii. 8, 9, and other passages, we have formerly adverted to

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this doctrinal statement. As, however, not a few are disposed to pervert this doctrine, by applying it as the standard according to which God dispenses his temporal favours, it is therefore proper to bear in mind what I have said in Psalm xxxvii. 25, that these are bestowed according to the manner, and in the measure, which God pleases. Sometimes it happens that a good man is childless; and barrenness itself is considered a curse of God. Again, many of God's servants are oppressed with poverty and want, are borne down under the weight of sickness, and harassed and perplexed with various calamities. It is therefore necessary to keep this general principle in view, That God sometimes bestows his bounty more profusely, and, at other times, more sparingly, upon his children, according as he sees it to be most for their good; and, moreover, he sometimes conceals the tokens of his kindness, apparently as if he had no regard for his people at all. Still, amid this perplexity, it constantly appears that these words were not uttered in vain, *the righteous and their offspring are blessed.* God very frequently blasts the vain hopes of the ungodly, whose sole object is to bear rule in the world, and to raise their children to places of wealth and honour. On the other hand, as the faithful are satisfied with bringing up their children in the fear of God, and contented to live sparingly, God, as it were with an outstretched hand, exalts them to honour. Add to this, that anciently, under the law, the truth of this doctrine was more evident; because it was requisite for a people inexperienced and feeble, to be trained gradually, by means of temporal benefits, to entertain a better hope. And in our times, but for our vices, God's temporal kindness would shine more brightly upon us. For experience demonstrates that what is immediately subjoined does not uniformly hold true, *wealth and riches shall be in the houses of the righteous.* It is no uncommon occurrence for the virtuous and holy to suffer hunger, and to be in want even of the most homely fare; and, for this reason, it would not be for their good were God to bestow more earthly benefits upon them. In afflicting circumstances, numbers of them would be incapable of behaving in a manner becoming their profession.

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In the meantime, we may observe, that the grace which the prophet commends appears principally in this, that the good and sincere are satisfied with their humble estate, whereas no portion, however large, even to the extent of the world itself, will content the ungodly worldling. The old adage holds true, That the covetous wants that which he has, as well as that which he has not; because he is master of nothing, and is the slave of his own wealth. In connection with this clause must also be taken that which follows, *the righteousness of good men endureth for ever.* This, in fact, constitutes the true and proper difference between the godly and ungodly; because the latter may, for a time, hoard up immense wealth; yet, all that shall, according to the words of the prophet, "suddenly vanish away at the blast of the Almighty," Haggai i. 9. And we daily see that what has been acquired by violence and deceit, becomes the prey and property of others. But, to the faithful, their integrity is the best and surest preserver of God's blessings.

4. *Light ariseth*[1] *in darkness to the righteous: he is gracious, merciful, and just.*
5. *A good man*[2] *showeth pity, and lendeth: he manages his affairs uprightly.*
6. *Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the just shall be held in perpetual remembrance.*
7. *He shall not be afraid when he hears evil tidings: his heart is fixed, because he confides in Jehovah.*

[1] "Ou, il a fait reluire la lumiere."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, he hath made light to arise *or* to shine." There is here perhaps, as Horsley supposes, an allusion to what happened in Egypt, when the Israelites had light in all their dwellings, while the land was wrapt in darkness. "The first hemistich," says Phillips, "is figurative. *Trouble* is represented by חשך, *darkness;* and *health* or *prosperity* by אור, *light.* A pious man shall be found to enjoy prosperity, even when troubles come upon the rest of the world; in such a period of general darkness there shall spring up a light to the upright; viz., Jehovah himself, who is *gracious, and merciful, and just.* The first two epithets of the second member are found, in Psalm cxi. 4, applied to God."

[2] "Ou, bien *sera* à l'homme qui."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, *it shall be* well with the man who." With this corresponds the translation of Archbishop Secker, which is, "Happy is the man who," &c. In proof that טוב signifies *happy*, he refers to Isaiah iii. 10; Jer. xliv. 17; Lam. iv. 9.

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8. *His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until*[1] *he see his desire*[2] *upon his enemies.*

4. *Light ariseth.* The Hebrew verb זרח, *zarach*, may be taken intransitively, as I have inserted it in the text, or transitively, as in the marginal reading; in either way the signification is the same. Whichsoever of these translations you adopt, the words are susceptible of a twofold interpretation; either, that as the sun shines on one part of the earth, and all the other parts of it are enveloped in darkness, so God exempts the righteous from the common calamities of human life; or, as day succeeds night, so God, though he permit the hearts of his servants to be in heaviness for a season, will cause a time of calmness and clearness to return to them. If the latter exposition is adopted, then, by *darkness*, or by the cloudy, and rainy, or stormy season, the prophet means the afflictions to which God subjects his servants for the trial of their patience. The former interpretation appears to be more appropriate, That, when the whole world is overwhelmed with troubles, God's grace shines upon the faithful, who feel comfortable and happy, because he is propitious towards them. It is thus that their condition is properly distinguished from that which forms the common lot of other men. For the ungodly, however they may exult

[1] "*Until.* This is not to be taken as if his freedom from fear would continue no longer, but is to be extended to all future times."—*Walford.*

[2] *His desire* is a supplement made in the French version, but not in the Latin; and, if it is admitted, we must be careful not to understand it as implying any thing like revenge. The good man has enemies of various kinds. Worldly and wicked men are often his enemies. But he does not desire *their* destruction; for this would be utterly inconsistent with the Christian spirit. According to Hammond, the supplement is unnecessary. His reading is," He shall behold *or* look upon his oppressors *or* distressers;" which he explains thus, "He shall behold them securely, confidently look in their faces, as we say, as being now no longer under their power, being freed from their tyranny and pressures." In Psalm liv. 7, we meet with a similar expression, which see explained, in reference to David's circumstances at that time, in vol. ii. p. 324, note. It is used again in Psalm lix. 11, "God shall let me see *or* look on mine enemies;" in Psalm xcii. 11, "Mine eye hath looked on mine enemies, and mine ear hath heard of them that rise up against me," that is, hath seen and heard of their destruction; and in Psalm cxviii. 7, "I shall look upon my haters," that is, having God for my helper, I shall without fear look upon them.

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in prosperity, are, nevertheless, blind in the midst of light, because they are strangers to God's paternal kindness; and, in adversity, they are plunged into the darkness of death; and, consequently, they never enjoy a season of calm repose. On the contrary, the godly, upon whom the favour of God constantly shines, though liable to the ills incident to humanity, are never overwhelmed with darkness, and hence the propriety of what is here stated, *light ariseth to them in darkness.* If we give to the Hebrew verb an active signification, then, in one respect, the construction of the words will be preferable. For I have no doubt that the prophet intends, as applicable to God, the epithets, *gracious, merciful, and just.* Therefore, if we read it as a neuter verb, *light ariseth,* then the latter clause of the verse will be the reason for the statement made in the former clause. As to the exposition, that the righteous and humane do not diffuse darkness over the world, as the unrighteous and wicked do; that they do not extract smoke from light, but light from smoke; it must be viewed as nothing else than a perversion of the prophet's language.

5. *A good man.* This is the commonly received interpretation of the passage. I am disposed, however, to prefer another, That it shall be well with those who are gracious and communicative; because this is more in accordance with the purport of the prophet's language. It is his intention to show how greatly the ungodly are deceived, when they aspire after happiness by nefarious and unlawful practices; seeing that the favour of God is the source and cause of all good things. Hence it becomes necessary to supply the relative *who.* He proceeds, therefore, to put us on our guard as to the deception which those practise upon themselves, who hasten to enrich themselves by sordid parsimony and oppressive extortion; inasmuch as the faithful, by their clemency and kindness, open up a channel, through which the favour of God flows to them: for the term טוֹב, *tob,* though in the masculine gender, signifying *good,* is often taken as if it were neuter, to denote that which is good. He puts *lending* as if it were the fruit of mercy; for the usurer also lends, but it is

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that, under the false pretence of assisting the distressed, he may plunder them. It is, then, the truly liberal, who, from compassion, and not with the design of ensnaring the poor, grant relief to them, that God makes prosperous. The term דברים, *debarim*, in the end of the verse, signifies *words;* but, along with David Kimchi, the most correct expositor among the Rabbins, I take it to mean *affairs*. *Words* is a very tame translation,[1] not to say, that, if this had been the prophet's intention, he would have expressed himself in more simple terms. The translation which I have given is the proper one, that the righteous will manage their affairs with prudence and discernment; so that, in their domestic affairs, they will neither be too lavish nor sordidly parsimonious; but, in every thing, they will study to combine frugality with economy, without giving way to luxury. And, in all their mercantile transactions, they will always be guided by the principles of equity and morality.

6. *Surely he shall not be moved.* The Hebrew particle כי, *ki*, may here be taken in its natural or causal meaning, and thus be rendered *for*, especially if in the preceding verse we adopt the marginal reading, *It shall be well with the man*. For he refers in more explicit terms to that happiness of which he spake, that God sustains the compassionate and humane, so that amid all the vicissitudes of life they remain unmoved; that he makes their innocence appear, and protects them from unjust calumny. It is said *they are never moved*. They are indeed liable to the incidents common to humanity, and even may often appear as if they were about to sink under the weight of their calamities; but their confidence remains unshaken, and by invincible patience they surmount all their adversities. With God as the defender of their righteousness, they yet do not escape from being assailed by the

[1] It is so translated in some of the ancient versions, and by several critics. In the Syriac it is, "will support his words in judgment;" *i. e.*, will never utter any thing but what is strictly true. In like manner, Cocceius. In the Arabic, which is followed by Castalio, it is, "will moderate his words in judgment;" *i. e.*, will speak as favourably of delinquents as he can consistently with truth, contrary to the practice of the wicked.—Psalm xciv. 21.

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slanders of the ungodly, but it is enough for them that their name is blessed before God, the angels, and the whole assembly of the godly.

7. *He shall not be afraid when he hears evil tidings.* This may appear to be a confirmation of the statement contained in the preceding verse, being as much as to say, That the righteous are exempted from the infamous name which the reprobate secure to themselves by their vicious conduct. I rather take the meaning to be, that the righteous, unlike unbelievers, who tremble at every even the slightest rumour, calmly and peacefully confide in God's paternal care, amid all the evil tidings which may reach them. Whence is it that unbelievers are in constant agitation, but that they imagine they are the sport of fortune on the earth, while God remains at ease in heaven? No wonder, then, that the rustling of the falling leaf troubles and alarms them. From such uneasiness the faithful are freed, because they neither give heed to rumours, nor does the fear of them prevent them from constantly invoking God. The children of God may also manifest symptoms of fear at the prospect of impending danger; for were they altogether regardless of calamities, such indifference would be the result, not of confidence in God, but of insensibility. But should they not be able to lay aside all fear and anxiety, yet, acknowledging God as the guardian of their life, and pursuing the tenor of their way, they intrust themselves to his preserving care, and cheerfully resign themselves to his disposal. This is that magnanimity of the righteous, under the influence of which the prophet declares they can disregard those rumours of evil which strike others with alarm. Wisely, too, do they rely upon God for support; because, encompassed on all sides with deaths innumerable, we would sink into despair were we not borne up by the confidence that we are secure under God's protection. Genuine stability, then, is that which the prophet here describes, and which consists in reposing with unshaken confidence in God. On the other hand, that presumptuous confidence with which the ungodly are intoxicated exposes them the more to the indignation of God, inasmuch as they overlook the frailty of

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human life, and in their pride of heart madly set themselves in opposition to him. Therefore, when "they shall say, Peace and safety, then shall sudden destruction come upon them," (1 Thess. v. 3.) But a sense of calamities, while it alarms and disconcerts the faithful, does not make them faint-hearted, because it does not shake their faith, by which they are rendered bold and stedfast. In a word, they are not insensible to their trials,[1] but the confidence which they place in God enables them to rise above all the cares of the present life. Thus they preserve calmness and composedness of mind, and wait patiently till the fit season arrives for taking vengeance upon the reprobate.

9. *He has distributed, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.*
10. *The wicked shall see it, and be angry; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:*[2] *the desire of the wicked shall perish.*

9. *He has distributed, he hath given to the poor.* Once more he affirms that the righteous never lose the fruit and the reward of their liberality. And first, by *dispersing*, the prophet intimates, that they did not give sparingly and grudgingly, as some do who imagine that they discharge their duty to the poor when they dole out a small pittance to them, but that they give liberally as necessity requires and their means allow; for it may happen that a liberal heart does not possess a large portion of the wealth of this world. All that the prophet means is, that they are never so parsimonious as not to be always ready to distribute according to their means. Next he adds, *they give to the poor*, meaning that they do not bestow their charity at random, but with prudence and dis-

[1] "Neque ferrei sunt neque stipites."—*Lat.* "Ils ne sont point de fer, ne semblables à des souches."—*Fr.* "They are not of iron, nor do they resemble blocks."

[2] "וְנָמַס, *And shall melt away.* Root מָסַס. It is said to denote the total destruction of any thing by the process of melting. The verb is employed by way of figure, to express the annihilation of the wicked, in Ps. lxviii. 3."—*Phillips.*

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cretion meet the wants of the necessitous. We are aware that unnecessary and superfluous expenditure for the sake of ostentation is frequently lauded by the world; and, consequently, a larger quantity of the good things of this life is squandered away in luxury and ambition than is dispensed in charity prudently bestowed. The prophet instructs us that the praise which belongs to liberality does not consist in distributing our goods without any regard to the objects upon whom they are conferred, and the purposes to which they are applied, but in relieving the wants of the really necessitous, and in the money being expended on things proper and lawful. This passage is quoted by Paul, (2 Cor. ix. 9,) in which he informs us that it is an easy matter for God to bless us with plenty, so that we may exercise our bounty freely, deliberately, and impartially, and this accords best with the design of the prophet. The next clause, *his righteousness endureth for ever*, is susceptible of two interpretations. That immoderate ambition which impels the ungodly to squander away their goods merits not the name of virtue. It may, therefore, with propriety be said, that it is a uniform course of liberality which is here praised by the prophet, according to what he formerly observed, *that the righteous manage their affairs with discretion.* If any prefer to refer it to the fruit of righteousness, I have no objection. And, indeed, it appears to be a repetition of the same sentence which lately came under our notice. Then the prophet shows how God by his benefits preserves the glory of that righteousness which is due to their liberality, and does not disappoint them of their reward, in that he exalteth their horn more and more, that is, their power or their prosperous condition.

10. *The wicked shall see it.*[1] Here follows a contrast similar to that which we met with in Psalm ii. 5, which renders the grace of God towards the faithful the more illustrious. His meaning is, that though the wicked may cast off all regard to piety, and banish from their minds all thoughts of human affairs being under the superintending providence of God,

[1] "*The wicked shall see it; i. e.*, the exalted horn."—*Dimock.*

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they shall yet be made to feel, whether they will or no, that the righteous, in compliance with God's command, do not vainly devote themselves to the cultivation of charity and mercy. Let them harden themselves as they choose, yet he declares that the honour, which God confers upon his children, shall be exhibited to them, the sight of which shall make them gnash with their teeth, and shall excite an envy that shall consume them by inches.[1] In conclusion, he adds, that *the wicked shall be disappointed of their desires.* They are never content, but are continually thirsting after something, and their confidence is as presumptuous as their avarice is unbounded. And hence, in their foolish expectations, they do not hesitate at grasping at the whole world. But the prophet tells them that God will snatch from them what they imagined was already in their possession, so that they shall always depart destitute and famishing.

PSALM CXIII.

In this psalm the providence of God furnishes matter for praising him, because, though his excellency is far above the heavens, nevertheless, he deigns to cast his eyes upon the earth to take notice of mankind. And as not a few are disconcerted by the vicissitudes which they behold occurring in the world, the prophet takes occasion, from these sudden and unlooked for changes, to warn us to attend expressly to God's providence, that we may entertain no doubt that all things are governed according to his will and pleasure.[2]

[1] " Et par une envie qu'ils auront les fera mourir à petit feu."—*Fr.*

[2] This interesting little ode, which is alike elegant in its structure, and devotional in its sentiment, its theme being the celebration of Jehovah's power, glory, and mercy, is thought by Bishop Patrick to be the commencement of what the Hebrews called the Great Hallel or Hymns, which they recited at their tables in the new moons and other feasts, especially in the paschal night, after they had eaten the lamb. He supposes that the Great Hallel included this and the five following psalms. See p. 310. "It is very uncertain who was the author of this psalm ; but as the 7th and 8th verses are manifestly taken from 1 Sam. ii. 8, and the 9th probably alludes to the history of Hannah, it might be composed by Samuel or David, who were so nearly interested in the signal mercies vouchsafed to her."—*Dimock.*

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1. *Praise ye Jehovah. Praise, ye servants of Jehovah! praise the name of Jehovah.*
2. *Blessed be the name of Jehovah henceforth and for ever.*
3. *Jehovah's name is to be praised, from the rising of the sun unto his going down.*
4. *Jehovah is high above all nations, his glory is above the heavens.*

1. *Praise, ye servants of Jehovah!* This psalm contains abundant reasons for all men without exception to praise God. The faithful alone being endued with spiritual perception to recognise the hand of God, the prophet addresses them in particular. And if we consider how cold and callous men are in this religious exercise, we will not deem the repetition of the call to praise God superfluous. We all acknowledge that we are created to praise God's name, while, at the same time, his glory is disregarded by us. Such criminal apathy is justly condemned by the prophet, with the view of stirring us up to unwearied zeal in praising God. The repetition, then, of the exhortation to praise him, ought to be considered as referring both to perseverance and ardour in this service. If, by *the servants of God*, some would rather understand the Levites, to whom the charge of celebrating his praises under the Law was committed, I am not much opposed to it, provided they do not exclude the rest of the faithful, over whom formerly God appointed the Levites as leaders and chief musicians, that he might be praised by all his people without exception. When the Holy Spirit addresses the Levites expressly in relation to the subject of God's praises, it is designedly that, by their example, they may show the way to others, and that the whole Church may respond in one holy chorus. Now that we are all "a royal priesthood," (1 Pet. ii. 9,) and as Zechariah testifies, (chap. xiv. 21,) that under the reign of Christ, the meanest of the people shall be Levites, there is no question that, excepting unbelievers who are mute, the prophet invites us all in common to render this service unto God.

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2. *Blessed be the name of Jehovah.* The prophet confirms what I stated above, that the praises of God must be continued throughout the whole course of our life. If his name is to be continually praised, it ought, at least, to be our earnest endeavour, during our brief pilgrimage here, that the remembrance of it may flourish after we are dead. In the next verse, he extends the glory of God's name to all parts of the earth; wherefore our apathy will be totally inexcusable, if we do not make its praises resound among ourselves. Under the law, God could not be praised aright, excepting in Judea by his own people, to whom the knowledge of him was confined. His works, however, which are visible to all nations, are worthy of the admiration of the whole world. To the same effect is the following clause respecting the loftiness of God's glory; for can there be any thing more base, than for us to magnify it but seldom and tardily, considering it ought to fill our thoughts with enrapturing admiration? In extolling the name of God so highly, the prophet intends to show us that there is no ground for indifference; that silence would savour of impiety were we not to exert ourselves to the utmost of our ability to celebrate his praises, in order that our affections may, as it were, rise above the heavens. When he adds, that *God is high above all nations*, there is an implied reproach, by which he fastens upon the chosen people the charge of apathy in the exercise of praise. For can there be any thing more preposterous, than for those who are eye-witnesses of God's glory, which shines forth even among the blind, to refrain from making it the theme of their praises? At the very time when God conferred upon the Jews the exclusive honour of being the depositaries of the knowledge of his heavenly doctrine, he was nevertheless, according to Paul, not without a witness, (Acts xiv. 17; Rom. i. 20.) After the promulgation of the Gospel, his exaltation above the nations was more evident, for then the whole world was placed under his sway.

5. *Who is like unto Jehovah our God, who hath his dwelling on high,*

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6. *Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, and on earth!*[1]
7. *Who raises the poor from the dust, who lifts the afflicted from the dunghill;*
8. *That he may place him with princes, with the princes of his people.*
9. *Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in the family, a joyful mother of children. Praise ye Jehovah.*[2]

5. *Who is like unto Jehovah our God.* The prophet strengthens his position for the celebration of God's praises, by contrasting the height of his glory and power with his unbounded goodness. Not that his goodness can be separated from his glory; but this distinction is made out of regard to men, who would not be able to endure his majesty, were he not kindly to humble himself, and gently and kindly draw us towards him. The amount is, that God's dwelling above the heavens, at such a distance from us, does not prevent him from showing himself to be near at hand, and plainly providing for our welfare; and, in saying that God is exalted above the heavens, he magnifies his mercy towards men, whose condition is mean and despicable, and informs us that he might righteously hold even angels in contempt, were it not that, moved by paternal regard, he condescends to take them under his care. If in regard to angels he

[1] "Lowth translates rightly after Hare:—

'Who is like Jehovah our God?
Who dwelleth high,
Who looketh low;
In heaven and on earth.'

He refers to the same structure, Cant. i. 5. For the first part, see Jer. xlix. 8; and for the whole, see Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Isa. lvii. 15."—*Archbishop Secker in Merrick's Annotations on the Psalms.* Lowth observes that the last member is to be divided, and assigned in its two divisions to the two preceding members, as if it were, "Who dwelleth high in heaven, and looketh low on earth."

[2] The words, *Praise ye Jehovah*, at the end of the psalm, are, in the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, and Æthiopic versions, and in a very ancient manuscript, placed at the head of next psalm, where, perhaps, they formerly stood as the title.

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humble himself, what is to be said in regard to men, who, grovelling upon the earth, are altogether filthy? Is it asked, whether or not God fills heaven and earth? The answer is obvious. The words of the prophet simply mean, that God may trample the noblest of his creatures under his feet, or rather that, by reason of their infinite distance, he may entirely disregard them. In short, we must conclude that it is not from our proximity to him, but from his own free choice, that he condescends to make us the objects of his peculiar care.

7. *Who raiseth the poor from the dust.* In this passage, he speaks in terms of commendation of God's providential care in relation to those diversified changes which men are disposed to regard as accidental. He declares that it is solely by the appointment of God that things undergo changes far surpassing our anticipations. If the course of events were always uniform, men would ascribe it merely to natural causes, whereas, the vicissitudes which take place teach us that all things are regulated in accordance with the secret counsel of God. On the other hand, struck with astonishment at the events which have happened contrary to our expectation, we instantly ascribe them to chance. And as we are so apt to view things from a point the very reverse from that of recognising God's superintending care, the prophet enjoins us to admire his providence in matters of marvellous, or of unusual occurrence; for since cowherds, and men of the lowest and most abject condition, have been elevated to the summit of power, it is most reasonable that our attention should be arrested by a change so unexpected. We now perceive the prophet's design. In this passage, as well as in others, he might have set before us the structure of the heavens and the earth; but, as our minds are unaffected by the ordinary course of things, he declares that the hand of God is most apparent in his marvellous works. And in saying that men of mean and abject condition are not merely elevated to some petty sovereignty, but that they are invested with power and authority over God's holy people, he

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increases the greatness of the miracle—that being of far more consequence than to rule in other parts of the earth; for the state or kingdom of the Church constitutes the principal and august theatre where God presents and displays the tokens of his wonderful power, wisdom, and righteousness.

9. *Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in the family.* He relates another work of God, which if, apparently, not so notable, ought not, on that account, the less to engage our thoughts. Unimpressed as we are by the ordinary works of God, we are constrained to express our astonishment when a woman who has been for a long period barren, unexpectedly becomes the mother of a numerous family. The Hebrew term, הבית, *habbayith*, is to be understood, not simply of a *house*, but also of a *household*,—that is, the thing containing, for that which is contained,—just as the Greeks apply οἶκος, and the Latins *domus*, to a *household*. The meaning is, that the woman who was formerly barren is blessed with fruitfulness, and fills the house with children. He attributes joy to mothers, because, though the hearts of all are prone to aspire after wealth, or honour, or pleasures, or any other advantages, yet is progeny preferred to every thing else. Wherefore, since God superintends the ordinary course of nature, alters the current of events, elevates those of abject condition and ignoble extraction, and makes the barren woman fruitful, our insensibility is very culpable, if we do not attentively contemplate the works of his hand.

PSALM CXIV.

This psalm contains a short account of that deliverance by which God, in bringing his people out of Egypt, and conducting them to the promised inheritance, gave a proof of his power and grace which ought to be held in everlasting remembrance. The design of that wonderful

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deliverance was, that the seed of Abraham might yield themselves wholly to God, who, receiving them by a gracious act of adoption, purposed that they should be to him a holy and peculiar people.[1]

1. *When Israel went out from Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a barbarous people ;*[2]
2. *Judah was for his*[3] *holiness, Israel for his dominions.*
3. *The sea saw, and fled :*[4] *Jordan was turned backward.*
4. *The mountains leaped like rams, and the hills as the lambs of the flock.*

1. *When Israel went out from Egypt.* That exodus being a remarkable pledge and symbol of God's love for the children of Abraham, it is not surprising that it should be so

[1] "The exodus of Israel from Egypt, with some of its most remarkable accompanying and consequent miracles, are, in this brief psalm, commemorated in the boldest style of poetry, with personifications, indeed, of inanimate nature of the utmost daring and sublimity, in 'thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.'"—*Drake's Harp of Judah.*

[2] The word לעז, *loez*, which Calvin renders, *a barbarous people*, is translated, in our English Bible, "a people of strange language." His version is supported by many authorities. The word is frequently found, in the sense he attaches to it, in Rabbinical works, and is so understood here by the Chaldee paraphrast, who has ברבראי, and by the LXX., who have βαρβάρου. The root of these terms, as well as the Latin word for *barbarous*, is probably the Hebrew בר, *out*, or *without*, redoubled; and so it signifies, to a Jew, any man of another nation. According to Parkhurst, the word, instead of signifying a barbarous or foreign language or pronunciation, seems rather to refer to the *violence* of the Egyptians towards the Israelites, or *the barbarity of their behaviour*, which, he observes, was more to the Psalmist's purpose than the barbarity of their language, even supposing the reality of the latter in the time of Moses.—See his Lexicon on לעז. Horsley reads, "a tyrannical people."

[3] "There is a peculiar beauty in the conduct of this psalm, in that the author utterly conceals the presence of God in the beginning of it, and rather lets a possessive pronoun (*i. e.* His) go without a substantive, than he will so much as mention any thing of Divinity there; because, if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap, and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, his name is not mentioned till afterwards, and then, with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once with all majesty."—*Spectator*, vol. vi. No. 461. If, however, the last two words of the preceding psalm, הללויה, *Halelu-yah*, *Praise ye Jehovah*, are the title to this psalm, the antecedent to *his* is supplied.

[4] In the Hebrew there is no pronoun after *saw;* nor is any inserted in the Septuagint and Arabic versions, or in the Chaldee. In our English Bible, *it* is inserted, and *him* in the Syriac version; but the sentence is certainly much more sublime without any such supplement.

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frequently called to remembrance. In the beginning of the psalm, the prophet informs us that the people whom God purchased at so great a price are no more their own. The opinion of certain expositors, that at that time the tribe of Judah was consecrated to the service of God, according to what is said in Exod. xix. 6, and 1 Pet. ii. 9, appears to me foreign to the prophet's design. All doubt about the matter is removed by what is immediately subjoined, God's taking Israel under his rule, which is simply a repetition of the same sentiment in other words. Judah being the most powerful and numerous of all the tribes, and occupying the chief place among them, here takes the precedency of the rest of the people. At the same time, it is very evident that the honour which is in a peculiar manner ascribed to them, belongs equally to the whole body of the people.[1] When God is said to be sanctified, it must be understood that the prophet is speaking after the manner of men, because, in himself, God is incapable of increase or diminution. *Judah is called his holiness,*[2] *and Israel his dominion,*[3] because his holy majesty, which hitherto had been little known, secured the veneration of all who had witnessed the displays of his incredible power. In delivering his people, God erected a kingdom for himself, and procured respect for his sacred name; if then they do not constantly reflect upon such a remarkable instance of his kindness, their insensibility is totally inexcusable.

[1] "Judah represents here the whole people of Israel, as Joseph does, in Ps. lxxxi. 6. The reason assigned by Kimchi for this use of יהודה here is, that at the time of the departure from Egypt, Judah was considered the head or chief of the tribes; see Gen. xlix. 8-10. This, however, is mere conjecture. If it be necessary to assign reasons for the distinction here conferred on this tribe, I should mention as one, that the ark was kept in the region occupied by the descendants of Judah, and, as another, that from him the Messiah was to spring."—*Phillips.*

[2] *God's holiness* being often taken for the *keeping his promise sacred* or *inviolate*, as in Ps. cii. 9, when, reference being made to the immutability of his covenant, it is added, "*holy* [as in another respect, *reverend*] is his name;" some, as Hammond and Cresswell, suppose that the meaning here is, that God's dealings towards Judah—the people of the Jews—were a demonstration of his faithfulness in performing his promise made to Abraham long before.

[3] Hammond reads, "And Israel his power," by which he understands that Israel was an instance of his power; that God, in his acting for Israel, declared his omnipotence most signally.

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3. *The sea saw, and fled.* He does not enumerate in succession all the miracles which were wrought at that time, but briefly alludes to the sea, which, though a lifeless and senseless element, is yet struck with terror at the power of God. Jordan did the same, and the very mountains shook. It is in a poetical strain that the Psalmist describes the receding of the sea and of the Jordan. The description, however, does not exceed the facts of the case. The sea, in rendering such obedience to its Creator, sanctified his name; and Jordan, by its submission, put honour upon his power; and the mountains, by their quaking, proclaimed how they were overawed at the presence of his dreadful majesty. By these examples it is not meant to celebrate God's power more than the fatherly care and desire which he manifests for the preservation of the Church; and, accordingly, Israel is very properly distinguished from the sea, the Jordan, and the mountains—there being a very marked difference between the chosen people and the insensate elements.

5. *What ailed thee, O sea! that thou fleddest? and thou, Jordan, that thou turnedst back?*
6. *Ye mountains, that ye did leep like rams; and ye hills, like lambs of the flock?*
7. *At the presence of the Lord, tremble, thou earth,*[1] *at the presence of the God of Jacob;*
8. *Who turned the rock into pools of water,*[2] *and the flinty rock into a fountain of waters.*[3]

5. *What ailed thee, O sea!* The prophet interrogates the sea,

[1] Street reads, "The earth was in pain." "All the ancient versions," says he, "have the preterperfect here. The Targum alone agrees with the present reading, if, indeed, that be an imperative mood. For I do not see why חולי may not be a participle passive with an *yod* added to it, as ההפכי may be a participle active with the same addition."

[2] Hammond reads, "into a lake of water." "The מים אגם," he observes, "is best rendered a *lake of water*, to note the abundance of it; accordingly, the Chaldee renders it לאריתה, *into a river:* and so the Psalmist expressly describes the 'gushing out of the waters from the rock,' that 'they ran in dry places like a river,' Psalm cv. 41."

[3] "The divine poet represents the very substance of the rock as being converted into water, not literally, but poetically—thus ornamenting his sketch of the wondrous power displayed on this occasion."—*Walford.*

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Jordan, and the mountains, in a familiar and poetical strain, as lately he ascribed to them a sense and reverence for God's power. And, by these similitudes, he very sharply reproves the insensibility of those persons, who do not employ the intelligence which God has given them in the contemplation of his works. The appearance which he tells us the sea assumed, is more than sufficient to condemn their blindness. It could not be dried up, the river Jordan could not roll back its waters, had not God, by his invisible agency, constrained them to render obedience to his command. The words are indeed directed to the sea, the Jordan, and the mountains, but they are more immediately addressed to us, that every one of us, on self-reflection, may carefully and attentively weigh this matter. And, therefore, as often as we meet with these words, let each of us reiterate the sentiment,—"Such a change cannot be attributed to nature, and to subordinate causes, but the hand of God is manifest here." The figure drawn from the *lambs* and *rams* would appear to be inferior to the magnitude of the subject. But it was the prophet's intention to express in the homeliest way the incredible manner in which God, on these occasions, displayed his power. The stability of the earth being, as it were, founded on the mountains, what connection can they have with rams and lambs, that they should be agitated, skipping hither and thither? In speaking in this homely style, he does not mean to detract from the greatness of the miracle, but more forcibly to engrave these extraordinary tokens of God's power on the illiterate.

7. *At the presence of the Lord.* Having aroused the senses of men by interrogations, he now furnishes a reply, which many understand to be a personification of the earth; because they take י, *yod*, to be the affix of the verb חולי, *chuli;* and they represent the earth as saying, It is my duty to tremble at the presence of the Lord. This fanciful interpretation is untenable; for the term, *earth*, is immediately subjoined. Others, with more propriety, considering the י, *yod*, in this, as in many other passages, to be redundant, adopt this interpretation: It is reasonable and becoming that the earth

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should tremble in the presence of the Lord. Again, the term חוּלִי, *chuli*, is by many rendered in the imperative mood; which interpretation I readily adopt, as it is most probable that the prophet again makes an appeal to the earth, that the hearts of men may be the more sensibly moved. The meaning is the same,—It must be that the earth quake at the presence of her King. And this view receives confirmation from the term אָדוֹן, *adon*, being used, which signifies *a lord or a master*. He then immediately introduces the name *of the God of Jacob*, for the purpose of banishing from men all notions of false gods. Their minds being prone to deceit, they are always in great danger of allowing idols to usurp the place of the true God. Another miracle is mentioned, in which God, after the passage of the people through the Red Sea, gave an additional splendid manifestation of his power in the wilderness. The glory of God, as he informs us, did not appear for one day only, on the departure of the people; it constantly shone in his other works, as when a stream suddenly issued out of the dry rock, Exodus xvii. 6. Waters may be found trickling out from among rocks and stony places, but to make them flow out of a dry rock, was unquestionably above the ordinary course of nature, or miraculous. I have no intention of entering into any ingenious discussion, how the stone was converted into water; all that the prophet means amounts simply to this, that water flowed in places formerly dry and hard. How absurd, then, is it for the sophists to pretend that a transubstantiation takes place in every case in which the Scripture affirms that a change has been produced? The substance of the stone was not converted into water, but God miraculously created the water, which gushed out of the dry rock.

PSALM CXV.

It is obvious that this psalm was penned when the Church was deeply afflicted. Unworthy as they are to be heard by God, the faithful,

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nevertheless, offer up supplications to him for deliverance, lest his holy name might be exposed to scorn and reproach among the heathen. Then, mustering courage, they mock at the madness of all who are addicted to the worship of idols; and, with holy boasting, they magnify their own happiness, in that they have been adopted by God; and from this also they take occasion to stimulate one another to acknowledge the kindness which they have received from him.

1. *Not unto us, O Jehovah! not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory, on account of thy mercy, on account of thy truth.*
2. *Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?*
3. *Surely our God is in heaven: he hath done whatsoever pleased him.*

1. *Not unto us, O Jehovah!* It is not certain by whom, or at what time, this psalm was composed.[1] We learn from the first part of it, that the faithful betake themselves to God, in circumstances of extreme distress. They do not make known their desires in plain words, but indirectly hint at the nature of their request. They openly disclaim all merit, and all hope of obtaining deliverance, otherwise than God's doing it from a *sole regard to his own glory*, for these things are inseparably connected. Deserving, therefore, to meet with a repulse, they yet beseech God not to expose his name to the derision of the heathen. In their distress they desire to obtain consolation and support; but, finding nothing in themselves meri-

[1] "As the former psalm ended abruptly, and this is connected with it by the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, Æthiopic, with nineteen MSS.; and as the following ejaculations so naturally arise from the consideration of the wonderful works of Jehovah just before recited, Lorinus's opinion, that it is only a continuation of the former, is not improbable. Patrick refers it to 2 Chron. xx. 2. Some suppose it to be written by Moses at the Red Sea. Others, by David in the beginning of his reign. Others, by Mordecai and Esther. Others, by the three children in the fiery furnace. Perhaps by Hezekiah, or some one in the Babylonish captivity. —See Psalm cxiv. 1."—*Dimock.* "There is nothing certain," observes Walford, "to be concluded respecting the author of this psalm, or the occasion on which it was written. It is conjectured, however, to belong to the time of Hezekiah, and to have been composed in celebration of the very extraordinary deliverance which was afforded to that pious prince, and to his people, from the blasphemies and arrogance of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, 2 Chron. xxxii.; Isaiah xxxvi. 37. Whether this conjecture be agreeable to the truth, we are unable to say, though a considerable probability that it is so, arises from the language of the psalm itself."

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torious of God's favour, they call upon him to grant their requests, that his glory may be maintained. This is a point to which we ought carefully to attend, that, altogether unworthy as we are of God's regard, we may cherish the hope of being saved by him, from the respect that he has for the glory of his name, and from his having adopted us on condition of never forsaking us. It must also be noticed, that their humility and modesty prevent them from openly complaining of their distresses, and that they do not begin with a request for their own deliverance, but for the glory of God. Suffused with shame by reason of their calamity, which, in itself, amounts to a kind of rejection, they durst not openly crave, at God's hand, what they wished, but made their appeal indirectly, that, from a regard to his own glory, he would prove a father to sinners, who had no claim upon him whatever. And, as this formulary of prayer has once been delivered to the Church, let us also, in all our approaches unto God, remember to lay aside all self-righteousness, and to place our hopes entirely on his free favour. Moreover, when we pray for help, we ought to have the glory of God in view, in the deliverance which we obtain. And it is most likely they adopted this form of prayer, being led to do so by the promise. For, during the captivity, God had said, "Not for your sake, but for mine own sake will I do this," Isaiah xlviii. 11. When all other hopes fail, they acknowledge this to be their only refuge. The repetition of it is an evidence how conscious they were of their own demerit, so that, if their prayers should happen to be rejected a hundred times, they could not, in their own name, prefer any charge against him.

2. *Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?* They here express how God would maintain his glory in the preservation of the Church, which, if he permitted to be destroyed, would expose his name to the impious reproaches of the heathen, who would blaspheme the God of Israel, as being destitute of power, because he forsook his servants in the time of need. This is not done from the persuasion that God requires any such representation, but rather that the faithful

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may direct their thoughts back to that holy zeal contained in the words to which we have formerly adverted, "The railings of those that railed against thee have fallen upon me," Psalm lxix. 10. And this is the reason for not having recourse to rhetorical embellishment, to move him to put forth his power to preserve the Church; they simply protest that their anxiety for their own safety does not prevent them from valuing the glory of God, even as it is worthy of being more highly valued. They go on to show how the glory of God was connected with their deliverance, by declaring that he was the Author of the covenant, which the ungodly had boasted was abolished and disannulled; and who, consequently, had declared that the grace of God was frustrated, and that his promises were vain. This is the ground on which they remind him of his favour and faithfulness, both of which were liable to mischievous calumnies, should he disappoint the hopes of his people, to whom he was bound by an everlasting covenant; and upon whom, in the exercise of his gratuitous mercy, he had bestowed the privilege of adoption. And as God, in making us also partakers of his Gospel, has condescended to graft us into the body of his Son, we ought to make a public acknowledgment of the same.

3. *Surely our God is in heaven.*[1] The faithful, with holy boldness, encourage themselves the more to prayer. Our prayers, we know, are worthless when we are agitated with doubts. Had that blasphemy penetrated their hearts, it would have inflicted a mortal wound. And hence they very opportunely guard against it, by discontinuing the train o their supplications. By-and-bye we shall consider the second clause of this verse in its proper place, where they scoff at the idols, and lewd superstitions of the heathen. But, at present, every word in this clause demands our careful inspection. When they place God in heaven, they do not

[1] "*Our God*, says he, *is in heaven*, as much as to say, that yours are not. The verse may be also regarded as a response to the question of the heathen, *Where is now their God?* Such a response was calculated to fortify the minds of the pious worshippers of Jehovah, against the ridicule which was heaped upon them by their idolatrous neighbours."—*Phillips.*

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confine him to a certain locality, nor set limits to his infinite essence; but they deny the limitation of his power, its being shut up to human instrumentality only, or its being subject to fate or fortune. In short, they put the universe under his control; and, being superior to every obstruction, he does freely every thing that may seem good to him. This truth is still more plainly asserted in the subsequent clause, *he hath done whatsoever pleased him.* God, then, may be said to dwell in heaven, as the world is subject to his will, and nothing can prevent him from accomplishing his purpose.

That God can do whatsoever he pleaseth is a doctrine of great importance, provided it be truly and legitimately applied. This caution is necessary, because curious and forward persons, as is usual with them, take the liberty of abusing a sound doctrine by producing it in defence of their frantic reveries. And in this matter we daily witness too much of the wildness of human ingenuity. This mystery, which ought to command our admiration and awe, is by many shamelessly and irreverently made a topic of idle talk. If we would derive advantage from this doctrine, we must attend to the import of God's doing whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and on the earth. And, first, God has all power for the preservation of his Church, and for providing for her welfare; and, secondly, all creatures are under his control, and therefore nothing can prevent him from accomplishing all his purposes. However much, then, the faithful may find themselves cut off from all means of subsistence and safety, they ought nevertheless to take courage from the fact, that God is not only superior to all impediments, but that he can render them subservient to the advancement of his own designs. This, too, must also be borne in mind, that all events are the result of God's appointment alone, and that nothing happens by chance. This much it was proper to premise respecting the use of this doctrine, that we may be prevented from forming unworthy conceptions of the glory of God, as men of wild imaginations are wont to do. Adopting this principle, we ought not to be ashamed frankly to acknowledge that God, by his eternal counsel, manages all things in such a

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manner, that nothing can be done but by his will and appointment.

From this passage Augustine very properly and ingeniously shows, that those events which appear to us unreasonable not only occur simply by the permission of God, but also by his will and decree. For if our God doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, why should he permit that to be done which he does not wish? Why does he not restrain the devil and all the wicked who set themselves in opposition to him? If he be regarded as occupying an intermediate position between doing and suffering, so as to tolerate what he does not wish, then, according to the fancy of the Epicureans, he will remain unconcerned in the heavens. But if we admit that God is invested with prescience, that he superintends and governs the world which he has made, and that he does not overlook any part of it, it must follow that every thing which takes place is done according to his will. Those who speak as if this would be to render God the author of evil are perverse disputants. Filthy dogs though they be, yet they will not, by their barking, be able to substantiate a charge of lying against the prophet, or to take the government of the world out of God's hand. If nothing occurs unless by the counsel and determination of God, he apparently does not disallow sin; he has, however, secret and to us unknown causes why he permits that which perverse men do, and yet this is not done because he approves of their wicked inclinations. It was the will of God that Jerusalem should be destroyed, the Chaldeans also wished the same thing, but after a different manner; and though he frequently calls the Babylonians his stipendiary soldiers, and says that they were stirred up by him, (Isa. v. 26;) and farther, that they were the sword of his own hand, yet we would not therefore call them his allies, inasmuch as their object was very different. In the destruction of Jerusalem God's justice would be displayed, while the Chaldeans would be justly censured for their lust, covetousness, and cruelty. Hence, whatever takes place in the world is according to the will of God, and yet it is not his will that any evil should be done. For however incomprehensible his counsel may be to us, still it is always based upon the best of

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reasons. Satisfied with his will alone, so as to be fully persuaded, that, notwithstanding the great depth of his judgments, (Ps. xxxvi. 6,) they are characterised by the most consummate rectitude; this ignorance will be far more learned than all the acumen of those who presume to make their own capacity the standard by which to measure his works. On the other hand, it is deserving of notice, that if God does whatsoever he pleases, then it is not his pleasure to do that which is not done. The knowledge of this truth is of great importance, because it frequently happens, when God winks and holds his peace at the afflictions of the Church, that we ask why he permits her to languish, since it is in his power to render her assistance. Avarice, fraud, perfidy, cruelty, ambition, pride, sensuality, drunkenness, and, in short, every species of corruption in these times is rampant in the world, all which would instantly cease did it seem good to God to apply the remedy. Wherefore, if he at any time appears to us to be asleep, or has not the means of succouring us, let this tend to make us wait patiently, and to teach us that it is not his pleasure to act so speedily the part of our deliverer, because he knows that delay and procrastination are profitable to us; it being his will to wink at and tolerate for a while what assuredly, were it his pleasure, he could instantly rectify.

4. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.*
5. *They have a mouth, but they do not speak: they have eyes, and see not:*
6. *They have ears, and do not hear: they have noses, and smell not:*
7. *They have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not: they do not speak through their throat.*[1]

[1] Hammond reads the last clause, "neither breathe, *or* murmur, they through their throats." "What יהגו here signifies," says he, "will be concluded by the context which immediately before had mentioned their *having mouths and not speaking*. Here, therefore, (as there the proper action of the *mouth* was *speech*,) the proper action of the *throat* or *larynx* seems to be intended, and that is *to breathe*. So when, Psalm xc. 9, he saith, 'We consume our days, כמו הגה, the Targum reads, היך הבל פומא, 'as a vapour,' *i. e.*, 'breath of the mouth in winter.' If this is not the sense, then certainly it is an inarticulate sound, contradistinct from speaking. So Kimchi and Aben Ezra state it, and quote Isaiah xxxviii. 14, where the word is applied to the *murmuring* of the *dove*."

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8. *Those who make them shall be like unto them; and all those who trust to them.*

4. *Their idols.* This contrast is introduced for the purpose of confirming the faith of the godly, by which they repose upon God alone; because, excepting him, all that the minds of men imagine of divinity is the invention of folly and delusion. To know the error and the madness of the world certainly contributes in no small degree to the confirmation of true godliness; while, on the other hand, a God is presented to us, whom we know assuredly to be the maker of heaven and earth, and whom we are to worship, not without reason or at random. The more effectually to silence the arrogance of the ungodly, who proudly presume to set at nought God and his chosen people, he contemptuously ridicules their false gods, first calling them *idols*, that is to say, things of nought, and, next, showing from their being formed of inanimate materials, that they are destitute of life and feeling. For can there be anything more absurd than to expect assistance from them, since neither the materials of which they are formed, nor the form which is given to them by the hand of men, possess the smallest portion of divinity so as to command respect for them? At the same time, the prophet tacitly indicates that the value of the material does not invest the idols with more excellence, so that they deserve to be more highly esteemed. Hence the passage may be translated adversatively, thus, Though they are of gold and silver, yet they are not gods, because they are the work of men's hands. Had it been his intention merely to depreciate the substance of which they were composed, he would rather have called them wood and stone, but at present he speaks only of gold and silver. In the meantime, the prophet reminds us that nothing is more unbecoming than for men to say that they can impart either essence, or form, or honour to a god, since they themselves are dependant upon another for that life which will soon disappear. From this it follows, that the heathen vainly boast of receiving help from gods of their own devising. Whence does idolatry take its origin but from the imaginations of men? Having abundance

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of materials supplied to their hand, they can make of their gold or silver, not only a goblet or some other kind of vessel, but also vessels for meaner purposes, but they prefer making a god. And what can be more absurd than to convert a lifeless mass into some new deity? Besides, the prophet satirically adds, that while the heathen fashion members for their idols, they cannot enable them to move or use them. It is on this account that the faithful experience their privilege to be the more valuable, in that the only true God is on their side, and because they are well assured that all the heathen vainly boast of the aid which they expect from their idols, which are nothing but shadows.

This is a doctrine, however, which ought to receive a greater latitude of meaning; for from it we learn, generally, that it is foolish to seek God under outward images, which have no resemblance or relation to his celestial glory. To this principle we must still adhere, otherwise it would be easy for the heathen to complain that they were unjustly condemned, because, though they make for themselves idols upon earth, they yet were persuaded that God is in heaven. They did not imagine that Jupiter was either composed of stone, or of gold, or of earth, but that he was merely represented under these similitudes. Whence originated this form of address common among the ancient Romans, "To make supplication before the gods," but because they believed the images to be, as it were, the representations of the gods?[1] The Sicilians, says Cicero, have no gods before whom they can present their supplications. He would not have spoken in this barbarous style, had the notion not been prevalent, that the figures of the heavenly deities were represented to them in brass, or silver, or in marble;[2] and cherishing the notion, that in approaching these images the gods

[1] "Car que vouloit dire ceste façon de parler dont usoyent les anciens Romains, faire oraison deuant les dieux sinon qu'ils estimoyent que les idoles estoyent comme les representations des dieux?"—*Fr.*

[2] But though these images might, at first, be intended merely to bring the real Deity before the senses, and thus to impress the mind the more deeply with sentiments of awe and devotion, yet in process of time they began to be considered, especially by the ignorant multitude, as being really gods.

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were nearer to them, the prophet justly exposes this ridiculous fancy, that they would enclose the Deity within corruptible representations, since nothing is more foreign to the nature of God than to dwell under stone, or a piece of marble, or wood, and stock of a tree, or brass, or silver.[1] For this reason, the prophet Habakkuk designates that gross mode of worshipping God, the school of falsehood, (ii. 18.) Moreover, the scornful manner in which he speaks of their gods deserves to be noticed, *they have a mouth, but they do not speak;* for why do we betake ourselves to God, but from the conviction that we are dependant upon him for life; that our safety is in him, and that the abundance of good, and the power to help us, are with him? As these images are senseless and motionless, what can be more absurd than to ask from them that of which they themselves are destitute?

8. *They who make them shall be like unto them.* Many are of opinion that this is an imprecation, and hence translate the future tense in the optative mood, *may they become like*

[1] The heathen not only considered their *idols* or *images* as representing their gods, but believed that, when consecrated by their priests, they were thereby animated by the gods whom they represented, and hence were worshipped as such. "Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*, B. viii. c. 23) tells us of the theology of the heathen, received from Trismegistus, that statues were the bodies of their gods, which, by some magical ceremonies, or θεουργίαι, were forced to join themselves as souls, and so animate and enliven those dead organs, to assume and inhabit them. And so Proclus (*De Sacrif. et Mag.*) mentions it as the common opinion of the Gentiles, that the 'gods were, by their favour and help, present in their images;' and, therefore, the Tyrians, fearing that Apollo would forsake them, bound his image with golden chains, supposing then the god could not depart from them. The like did the Athenians imagine when they clipped the wings of the image of Victory; and the Sicilians, in Cicero, (*De Divin.*) who complain that they had no gods in their island, because Verres, Prætor in Sicily, had taken away all their statues. And so we know Laban, when he had lost his Teraphim, tells Jacob, (Gen. xxxi. 30,) 'that he had stolen his gods;' and so of the golden calf, after the feasts of consecration, proclamation is made before it, 'These be thy gods, O Israel!' But this of the animation and inspiriting of images, by their rites of consecration, being but a deception and fiction of their priests, the Psalmist here discovers it, and assures all men that they are as inanimate and senseless after the consecration as before; base silver and gold, with images of mouths and ears, &c., but without any power to use any of them, and, consequently, most unable to hear or help their votaries."—*Hammond.*

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unto them. But it will be equally appropriate to regard it as the language of ridicule, as if the prophet should affirm that the idolaters are equally stupid with the stocks and stones themselves. And he deservedly severely reprehends men naturally endued with understanding, because they divest themselves of reason and judgment, and even of common sense. For those who ask life from things which are lifeless, do they not endeavour to the utmost of their power to extinguish all the light of reason? In a word, were they possessed of a particle of common sense, they would not attribute the properties of deity to the works of their own hands, to which they could impart no sensation or motion. And surely this consideration alone should suffice to remove the plea of ignorance, their making false gods for themselves in opposition to the plain dictates of natural reason. As the legitimate effect of this, they are wilfully blind, envelop themselves in darkness, and become stupid; and this renders them altogether inexcusable, so that they cannot pretend that their error is the result of pious zeal. And I have no doubt that it was the prophet's intention to remove every cause and colour of ignorance, inasmuch as mankind spontaneously become stupid.

Whosoever trusteth in them. The reason why God holds images so much in abhorrence appears very plainly from this, that he cannot endure that the worship due to himself should be taken from him and given to them. That the world should acknowledge him to be the sole author of salvation, and should ask for and expect from him alone all that is needed, is an honour which peculiarly belongs to him. And, therefore, as often as confidence is reposed in any other than in himself, he is deprived of the worship which is due to him, and his majesty is, as it were, annihilated. The prophet inveighs against this profanity, even as in many passages the indignation of God is compared to jealousy, when he beholds idols and false gods receiving the homage of which he has been deprived, (Exod. xxxiv. 14; Deut. v. 9.) If a man carve an image of marble, wood, or brass, or if he cast one of gold or silver, this of itself would not be so detestable a thing; but when men attempt to attach God to their inventions, and to make him, as it were, descend from heaven, then a

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pure fiction is substituted in his place. It is very true that God's glory is instantly counterfeited when it is invested with a corruptible form; ("To whom hast thou likened me?" he exclaims by Isaiah, xl. 25, and xlvi. 5, and the Scripture abounds with such texts;) nevertheless, he is doubly injured when his truth, and grace, and power, are imagined to be concentrated in idols. To make idols, and then to confide in them, are things which are almost inseparable. Else whence is it that the world so strongly desires gods of stone, or of wood, or of clay, or of any earthly material, were it not that they believe that God is far from them, until they hold him fixed to them by some bond? Averse to seek God in a spiritual manner, they therefore pull him down from his throne, and place him under inanimate things. Thus it comes to pass, that they address their supplications to images, because they imagine that in them God's ears, and also his eyes and hands, are near to them. I have observed that these two vices can hardly be severed, namely, that those who, in forging idols, change the truth of God into a lie, must also ascribe something of divinity to them. When the prophet says that unbelievers put their trust in idols, his design, as I formerly noticed, was to condemn this as the chief and most detestable piece of profanity.

9. *O Israel! trust*[1] *thou in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield.*
10. *O house of Aaron! trust ye in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield.*
11. *Ye that fear Jehovah! trust in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield.*
12. *Jehovah has been mindful of us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.*
13. *He will bless them that fear Jehovah, both the small with the great.*
14. *Jehovah will add unto you, unto you and unto your children.*
15. *Blessed are ye of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth.*

[1] Many interpreters translate the verb *trust*, which occurs here and in the next two verses, in the indicative mood, "Israel trusteth in Jehovah," &c.; judging this to be more agreeable to the occasion than the imperative, which is found in the present copies of the Hebrew text. This emendation is supported by all the ancient versions.

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9. *O Israel! trust thou in Jehovah.* The prophet again resumes the doctrinal point, that the genuine worshippers of God have no cause to fear that he will forsake or frustrate them in the time of need; because he is as much disposed to provide for their safety as he is furnished with power to do it. He proceeds, in the first place, to exhort all the Israelites generally to place their confidence in God; and, secondly, he addresses the house of Aaron in particular; and, thirdly, he sets down all who fear God. For this arrangement there was good cause. God had adopted indiscriminately all the people, to whom also his grace was offered, so that they were bound in common to place their hope in him. In accordance with this Paul says, that the twelve tribes of Israel wait for the promised deliverance, (Acts xxvi. 7.) The prophet, therefore, with great propriety first addresses Israel at large. But having in a peculiar manner set apart the Levites for himself, and more especially the priests of the house of Aaron, to take the precedence, and to preside over ecclesiastical matters, he demands more from them than from the common people; not that salvation was promised specially to them, but because it was proper that they who had the exclusive privilege of entering the sanctuary should point out the way to others. As if the prophet had said, Ye sons of Aaron, whom God hath chosen to be the teachers of religion to his people, be ye to others an example of faith, seeing that he hath so highly honoured you in permitting you to enter his sanctuary.

11. *Ye who fear Jehovah!* He does not speak of strangers, as some erroneously suppose, as if this were a prediction respecting the calling of the Gentiles. Connecting them with the children of Israel and with the sons of Aaron, they are of opinion that he refers to the heathens and to the uncircumcised who were not yet gathered into the sheepfold. By parity of reason one might infer, that the priests are not of the seed of Abraham, because they are separately mentioned. It is more probable that there is in these words a tacit correction of what he had said before, by which he makes a distinction between the genuine worshippers of God and those hypocrites who

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were the degenerate sons of Abraham. Not a few of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh having departed from the faith of their father, the prophet here restricts the promise to those who, having received it by faith, were worshipping God in purity. We now perceive the reason for his first addressing *the Israelites*, next *the house of Aaron*, and then *the fearers of Jehovah*. It is as if a person in our times were to point his exhortation first to the whole body of the Church, and then come more particularly to the ministers and teachers, who ought to be ensamples to others. And as many falsely pique themselves upon the mere name of being connected with the Church, and hence deserve not to be classed with God's true followers, he expressly mentions the genuine and not the counterfeit worshippers of God.

12. *Jehovah hath remembered us.* Many render the term *bless* in the past tense, *he has blessed*, it being the design of the prophet, according to them, to propose the past experience of God's kindness as an encouragement to cherish good hope for the future: "We have already, from long experience, been taught how valuable the favour of our God is, because from this source alone have flowed our prosperity, our abundance, and our stability." He assumes the principle, the truth of which ought to be admitted by all, that we neither enjoy prosperity nor happiness further than it pleases God to bless us. As often as the Israelites were rescued from manifold dangers, or succoured in time of need, or treated in a friendly manner, so many palpable proofs had they of the loving-kindness of God towards them. As, however, there is no just cause to urge us to change the verb from the future into the past tense, it is quite in unison with the scope of the passage, if we say that the same blessing is here promised to the faithful which they have formerly realised. Thus the meaning will be, that God, mindful of his covenant, has hitherto been attentive to us; therefore, as he has begun to favour us, he will continue to do so for ever. In pronouncing these blessings, he observes the same order as above, assigning to the children of Aaron a superior place in God's

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benediction, excluding from it those among the Israelites who were hypocrites.

He says, *both the small with the great*, by which circumstance he magnifies God's paternal regard the more, showing that he does not overlook even the meanest and most despised, provided they cordially invoke his aid. Now, as there is no acceptance of persons before God, our low and abject condition ought to be no obstruction to our drawing near to him, since he so kindly invites to approach him those who appear to be held in no reputation. Moreover, the repetition of the word *bless* is intended to mark the uninterrupted stream of his loving-kindness. Should any prefer the past tense, *he has blessed*, the meaning will be, that the favour of God towards his people has continued for a long period, which ought to be a sure evidence of the perpetuity of his fatherly regard. This interpretation is strengthened by the subsequent verse, in which he says, that God would multiply the benefits which he had up to that time conferred upon them. For God's liberality is an inexhaustible fountain, which will never cease to flow so long as its progress is not impeded by the ingratitude of men. And hence it will be continued to their posterity, because God manifests the grace and the fruit of his adoption even to a thousand generations.

15. *Ye are blessed of Jehovah.* In the preceding verse the prophet had given them the hope of uninterrupted happiness, arising from God's infinite resources never failing, however liberally and largely he bestows, and from his never ceasing to enrich those whom he hath admitted as sharers of his bounty. In confirmation of this doctrine, he declares that the children of Abraham were separated from other nations; so that, relying upon this privilege, they might unhesitatingly and unreservedly surrender themselves to a father so benignant and bountiful. And as the flesh, in consequence of its stupidity, cannot perceive the power of God, the understanding of which preserves us in a state of peace and security under his protection, the prophet, in designating him the maker of heaven and earth, reminds us that there is no ground to fear that he is unable to defend us; for, having created the

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heaven and the earth, he does not now remain unconcerned in heaven, but all creation is under his sovereign control.

16. *The heavens, the heavens are Jehovah's: but the earth he hath given to the children of men.*
17. *O God! the dead shall not praise thee, nor those who go down to silence.*
18. *But we will bless God from this time, and for ever. Praise ye Jehovah.*

16. *The heavens, the heavens are Jehovah's.* In this passage the prophet extols the bounty of God, and his paternal regard for the human race, in that, though he stood in need of nothing himself, he yet created the world, with all its fulness, for their use. How comes it to pass that the earth is every where covered with such a great variety of good things, meeting our eye in all directions, unless that God, as a provident father of a family, had designed to make provision for our wants? In proportion, therefore, to the comforts which we here enjoy, are the tokens of his fatherly care. This is the prophet's meaning, which I am astonished is so little attended to by the most of interpreters. The amount is, that God, satisfied with his own glory, has enriched the earth with abundance of good things, that mankind may not lack any thing. At the same time he demonstrates, that, as God has his dwelling-place in the heavens, he must be independent of all worldly riches; for, assuredly, neither wine, nor corn, nor any thing requisite for the support of the present life, is produced there. Consequently, God has every resource in himself. To this circumstance the repetition of the term *heavens* refers, *The heavens, the heavens are enough for God;* and as he is superior to all aid, he is to himself instead of a hundred worlds. It remains, therefore, as another consequence from this, that all the riches with which the world abounds proclaim aloud what a beneficent father God is to mankind. It is indeed surprising that there should be no relish for this doctrine, considering that the Holy Spirit spoke of the inestimable goodness of God. Under the papacy, they chanted this psalm in their churches, and they continue the practice

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still; but is there one among a hundred of them who reflects that God, in bestowing all good things upon us, reserves nothing for himself, except a grateful acknowledgment of them? And not only in this matter does the ingratitude of the world appear, but the wicked wretches have conducted themselves most vilely, in open and infamous blasphemy; perverting this verse, and making a jest of it, saying that God remains unconcerned in heaven, and pays no regard to the affairs of men. The prophet here expressly declares that the world is employed by God, for the sole purpose of testifying his paternal solicitude towards mankind; and yet these swine and dogs have made these words a laughing-stock, as if God, by reason of his vast distance from men, totally disregarded them. And here I am induced to relate a memorable story. While we were supping in a certain inn, and speaking of the hope of the heavenly life, a profane despiser of God happening to be present, treated our discourse with derision, and now and then mockingly exclaimed, "The heaven of heavens is the Lord's." Instantly afterwards he was seized with dreadful pain, and began to vociferate, "O God! O God!" and, having a powerful voice, he filled the whole apartment with his cries. Then I, who had felt indignant at his conduct, proceeded, in my own way, to tell him warmly, that now at least he perceived that they who mocked God were not permitted to escape with impunity. One of the guests, an honest and pious man, yet alive, but withal facetious, employed the occasion thus, "Do you invoke God? Have you forgotten your philosophy? Why do you not permit him to remain at ease in his own heaven?" And as often as the one bawled out, "O God!" the other, mocking him, retorted, "Where is now thy *Cœlum cœli Domino?*" At that time his pain indeed was mitigated; nevertheless, the remainder of his life was spent in impunity.

17. *O God! the dead shall not praise thee.* In these words the prophet goes on to beseech God to show himself propitious towards his Church, were there no other object to be gained than the preventing mankind from being utterly cut off, and the preserving a people, not only to enjoy his kind-

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ness, but also to invoke and praise his name. After celebrating God's peculiar favour towards the Israelites, and the beneficence which he displayed towards mankind at large, he has recourse to the mercy of God for the pardoning of the sins of his people. And he proceeds on this footing, that though the heathen nations revel amidst the profuseness of God's bounty, yet the seed of Abraham alone are set apart to celebrate his praises. "Lord, if thou shouldst allow us to perish, what would be the result, but that thy name would become extinct, and would be entombed with us?" From his appearing to deprive the dead of all sensibility, a question occurs: If souls, after they have departed from their corporeal prison, still survive? It is certain that they are then more vigorous and active, and, therefore, it must inevitably follow that God is also praised by the dead. Moreover, in appointing mankind their abode upon earth, he so disconnects them with God, that he leaves them a life such as they enjoy in common with the brutal tribes. For the earth was not given exclusively to men, but also to oxen, swine, dogs, lions, and bears, and what is more, to every sort of reptile and insect. For there is not a fly, nor a creeping thing, however mean, which the earth does not supply with an abode.[1] The solution of the first question is easy. Men were so situated on the earth that they might, as it were, with one voice celebrate the praises of God. And it was to this concord that the prophet in this place referred, as does also the Scripture in many other passages. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord," (Ps. cxviii. 17.) The good king Hezekiah also said, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee," (Isa. xxxviii. 19.) Jonah, too, when cast out of the belly of the fish, said, "I will offer sacrifices, and I will pay my vows unto the Lord," (Jonah ii. 10.)[2] In short, the prophet very justly excludes

[1] "Nulla enim musca est, nullus pediculus cui domicilium non præbeat terra."—*Lat.*

[2] Thus the present text of Scripture, and others of a similar kind, as Ps. vi. 6; xxx. 10; lxxxviii. 11; and Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19, are not to be understood as implying that the Hebrews of those times had no idea of a future state of existence beyond death and the grave. Such an interpretation would be at variance with many passages of the Old Testament, as Ps. xvi. 10; xlix. 15; lxxiii. 24; Prov. xiv. 32; Eccles. viii. 11-13; xi. 9; xii. 14; with the most explicit declarations of the New,

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the dead from taking any part in the celebration of God's praises; for among them there is no communion and fellowship qualifying them for mutually sounding forth his praises: the proclaiming of his glory on the earth being the very end of our existence. The reply to the second inquiry is this: The prophet says that the earth was given to mankind, that they might employ themselves in God's service, until they be put in possession of everlasting felicity. True, indeed, the abundance of the earth belongs also to the brutal tribes; but the Holy Spirit declares that all things were created principally for the use of men, that they might thereby recognise God as their father. In fine, the prophet concludes that the whole course of nature would be subverted, unless God saved his Church. The creation of the world would serve no good purpose, if there were no people to call upon God. Hence he infers that there will always be some left alive upon the earth. And he not only promises that the Church shall be preserved, but also calls upon all who are thus preserved to offer a tribute of gratitude to their deliverer; and, moreover, he engages in their name to set forth the praises of God. He does not speak merely of the persons who belong to one age, but of the whole body of the Church which God upholds from one generation after another, that he may never leave himself without some to testify and declare his justice, goodness, and mercy.

as to the possession of this knowledge by the ancient Hebrews, Heb. xi.; Luke xx. 37; and with what might reasonably be supposed of persons who were favoured with a supernatural revelation, and who enjoyed special intercourse with God, but who, had they been ignorant of a future state, knew less on this subject than Pagan writers, many of whom anticipated such a state in which virtue would receive its appropriate reward. In such passages the sensible appearances occasioned by death, and these alone, are represented. As to the eye of sense, nothing appears in the victim of death but inactivity, silence, decay, and corruption, the sacred writers seize upon these concomitants of that solemn and affecting event to add to the force of the argument which they are prosecuting.

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PSALM CXVI.

David, being delivered out of very great dangers, relates what cruel torment and anguish of mind he endured, and then how remarkably he was preserved by God. The desperate state of matters with him tended to make the power of God in his preservation more conspicuous; for had not God interposed for his deliverance, all hope would have failed. In this way he stirs himself up to gratitude, and acknowledges that he can make no other return to him for his innumerable benefits.[1]

1. *I have loved, because Jehovah shall hear the voice of my supplication.* 2. *Because he hath inclined his ear to me, and during my days I will call upon him.* 3. *The snares*[2] *of death compassed me,*[3] *and the sorrows of the grave found*

[1] This psalm is without a title in the Hebrew, although the LXX. have prefixed to it *Hallelujah*, with which Psalm cxv. ends. There have been various conjectures among interpreters as to its author. Some ascribe it to Hezekiah, and suppose it to relate to his recovery from the dangerous sickness recorded in Isa. xxxviii. Others think that it was composed by David upon his deliverance from the rebellion excited by his son Absalom, after which he immediately had liberty to return to the sanctuary and public assembly at Jerusalem, verses 14, 18, and 19. This opinion is confirmed from verse 11, in which he speaks of having for a time, under the sad experience of human treachery and deception, pronounced all men to be liars; a state of feeling more applicable to David's distressed circumstances during the rebellion of his son, than to Hezekiah on his recovery from sickness.

[2] The root of the Hebrew word חבלי, *cheblei*, here rendered *snares*, "is חבל, which signifies *to bind*, and in Piel conj., *to pain*, or *torment*. Gesenius, in his Thesaurus, under חבל, says:—'Pi. i. q. Kal, No. 1, *torsit*, inde *cum tormentis* et doloribus *enixa est*.' חבל consequently signifies *pain*, or *cable*. It would seem from the verb to which it is a subject, that the latter is the more suitable sense, whilst the parallelism is in favour of the former. The former, however, is here contained in the latter, for the expression חבלי מות alludes to the custom of binding the victims for slaughter, or malefactors when taken to the place of execution; which binding was productive of great pain."—*Phillips*. See vol. i. p. 264. Cresswell reads, "*The straits of the grave*, that is, the terrors of instant death, *had found me*."

[3] "—'compassed me.' The original word אפף expresses the repetition of the encircling of the toils. They surrounded him again and again."—*Horsley*.

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me:[1] *I found tribulation and grief.* 4. *And I will call upon the name of Jehovah; I beseech thee, O Jehovah! deliver my soul.*

1. *I have loved, because Jehovah will hear the voice of my supplication.* At the very commencement of this psalm David avows that he was attracted with the sweetness of God's goodness, to place his hope and confidence in him alone. This abrupt mode of speaking, *I have loved*, is the more emphatic, intimating that he could receive joy and repose nowhere but in God. We know that our hearts will be always wandering after fruitless pleasures, and harassed with care, until God knit them to himself. This distemper David affirms was removed from him, because he felt that God was indeed propitious towards him. And, having found by experience that, in general, they who call upon God are happy, he declares that no allurements shall draw him away from God. When, therefore, he says, *I have loved*, it imports that, without God, nothing would be pleasant or agreeable to him. From this we are instructed that those who have been heard by God, but do not place themselves entirely under his guidance and guardianship, have derived little advantage from the experience of his grace.

The second verse also refers to the same subject, excepting that the latter clause admits of a very appropriate meaning, which expositors overlook. The phrase, *during my days I will call upon him*, is uniformly understood by them to mean, I, who hitherto have been so successful in addressing God, will pursue the same course all my life long. But it should

[1] Fry's translation of this clause is:—

"The nets of Hades had caught hold upon me;"

on which he has the following note:—"Or, according to the usual meaning of צור and צרר, 'the pangs or pains of hell.' It is not impossible, indeed, that it should be derived from נצר; we might then render, 'The purveyors of Hades had found me:' and the imagery, at any rate, seems to be taken from the toils of the hunter. Michaelis would read מצודי, 'nets,' instead of מצרי, *pangs;* but it is very probable that, without any change, מצורי signifies some part of the apparatus of hunting. 'מצר, *a strait, distress, angustia.*' Ps. cxviii. 5; cxvi. 3; Lam. i. 3. In which last text, Mr Lowth says that 'there is a metaphor from those that hunt a prey, which they drive into some *strait* and narrow passage, from whence there is no making an escape.'"

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be considered whether it may not be equally appropriate *that the days of David* be regarded as denoting a fit season of asking assistance, the season when he was hard pressed by necessity. I am not prevented from adopting this signification, because it may be said that the prophet employs the future tense of the verb אקרא, *ekra*. In the first verse also, the term, *he shall hear*, is to be understood in the past tense, *he has heard*, in which case the copulative conjunction would require to be taken as an adverb of time, *when*, a circumstance this by no means unusual among the Hebrews. The scope of the passage will run very well thus: Because he has bowed his ear to me when I called upon him in the time of my adversity, and even at the season, too, when I was reduced to the greatest straits. If any are disposed to prefer the former exposition, I will not dispute the matter with them. The subsequent context, however, appears to countenance the latter meaning, in which David commences energetically to point out what those days were. And, with the design of magnifying God's glory according to its desert, he says that there was no way of his escaping from death, for he was like one among enemies, bound with fetters and chains, from whom all hope of deliverance was cut off. He acknowledges, therefore, that he was subjected to death, that he was overtaken and seized, so that escape was impossible. And as he declares that he was *bound by the cords of death*, so he, at the same time, adds, that *he fell into tribulation and sorrow*. And here he confirms what he said formerly, that when he seemed to be most forsaken of God, that was truly the proper time, and the right season for him to give himself to prayer.

5. *Jehovah is gracious and just; our God is merciful.*
6. *Jehovah guards the simple; I was brought low, and he saved me.*
7. *Return, O my soul! into thy rest; for Jehovah hath recompensed unto thee.*
8. *Because thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.*
9. *I will walk in the presence of Jehovah in the land of the living.*

5. *Jehovah is gracious.* He comes now to point out the

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fruits of that love of which he spoke, setting before him God's titles, in order that they might serve to preserve his faith in him. First, he denominates him *gracious*, because he is so ready graciously to render assistance. From this source springs that *justice* which he displays for the protection of his own people. To this is subjoined *mercy*, without which we would not deserve God's aid. And as the afflictions which overtake us frequently appear to preclude the exercise of his justice, hence it follows that there is nothing better than to repose upon him alone; so that his fatherly kindness may engross our thoughts, and that no voluptuous pleasure may steal them away to any thing else. He then accommodates the experience of God's benignity and equity to the preserving of the simple, that is, of such as, being undesigning, do not possess the requisite prudence for managing their own affairs. The term, rendered *simple*, is often understood in a bad sense, denoting persons inconsiderate and foolish, who will not follow wholesome advice. But, in this place, it is applied to those who are exposed to the abuse of the wicked, who are not sufficiently subtile and circumspect to elude the snares which are laid for them,—in short, to those who are easily overreached; while, on the contrary, the children of this world are full of ingenuity, and have every means at their command for maintaining and protecting themselves. David, therefore, acknowledges himself to be as a child, unable to consult his own safety, and totally unfit to ward off the dangers to which he was exposed. Hence the LXX. have not improperly translated the Hebrew term by the Greek, τὰ νήπια, *little children*.[1] The amount is, that when those who are liable to suffering have neither the prudence nor the means of effecting their deliverance, God manifests his wisdom towards them, and interposes the secret protection of

[1] This rendering of the LXX. also suggests the idea of *weakness*, which Fry has adopted, who reads, "Jehovah preserveth the weak." "The usual meaning of פתאים," says he, "is *simplices, fatui, persuasu faciles*; but I believe the Septuagint has preserved the true meaning of the passage, Φυλάσσων τὰ νήπια ὁ κυριος. The leading idea of פתה is *laxity* or *yielding*, and may as well apply to the weakness of the body, or of the faculties of the mind, under the pressure of grief and pain, as to the relaxing of the powers of the understanding, in yielding to the seductions of folly or vice."

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his providence between them and all the dangers by which their safety may be assailed. In fine, David holds forth himself as a personal example of this fact, in that, after being reduced to the greatest straits, he had, by the grace of God, been restored to his former state.

7. *Return, O my soul! unto thy rest.* He now exhorts himself to be of good courage; or rather, addressing his soul, tells it to be tranquil, because God was propitious towards him. By the term *rest*, some commentators understand God himself, but this is an unnatural interpretation. It is rather to be regarded as expressive of a calm and composed state of mind. For it is to be noticed, that David confesses himself to have been sorely agitated and perplexed amid an accumulation of ills, in the same way as each of us is conscious of his own inquietude, when the terrors of death encompass us. Although, therefore, David possessed unusual fortitude, he was yet distressed by reason of the conflict of grief, and an inward tremor so distracted his mind, that he justly complains of being deprived of his peace. He declares, however, that the grace of God was adequate to quiet all these troubles.

It may be asked, whether the experience of the grace of God alone can allay the fear and trepidation of our minds; since David declares, that, having experienced relief from Divine aid, he would, for the future, be at rest? If the faithful regain their peace of mind only when God manifests himself as their deliverer, what room is there for the exercise of faith, and what power will the promises possess? For, assuredly, to wait calmly and silently for those indications of God's favour, which he conceals from us, is the undoubted evidence of faith. And strong faith quiets the conscience, and composes the spirit; so that, according to Paul, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," reigns supremely there, Philip. iv. 7. And hence the godly remain unmoved, though the whole world were about to go to ruin. What is the import of this *returning unto rest?* I answer, that however much the children of God may be driven hither and thither, yet they constantly derive support from the word of God, so that they cannot totally and finally fall

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away. Confiding in his promises, they throw themselves upon his providence; and still they are sorely distressed by disquieting fears, and sadly buffeted by the storms of temptation. No sooner does God come to their assistance, than not only inward peace takes possession of their minds, but, from the manifestation of his grace, they are supplied with grounds for joy and gladness. Of this latter kind of quietness David here treats: declaring that, notwithstanding of all the prevalence of agitation of mind, it was now time for him to delight himself calmly in God. The term גמל, *gamal*, is improperly rendered *to reward;* because, in Hebrew, it usually signifies to confer a favour, as well as to give a recompense; which is confirmed by him in the following verse, in which he says that *his soul was delivered from death.* This, then, properly speaking, is the recompense; namely, that God, in delivering him from death, had wiped away the tears from his eyes. The arrangement of the words is transposed; for, according to our idiom, we would rather have said, *he hath delivered my feet from falling, and mine eyes from tears,* and then *he hath delivered my soul from death;* for we are wont to follow that arrangement, by which the most important circumstance comes to be mentioned last. Among the Hebrews such a collocation of the words, as in this passage, is by no means improper. This is their import: God has not only rescued me from present death, but also treated me with farther kindness, in chasing away sorrow, and stretching out his hand to prevent me from stumbling. The grace of God is enhanced, in that he restored to life one who had been almost dead.

9. *I will walk in the presence of Jehovah. To walk in the presence of God* is, in my opinion, equivalent to living under his charge. And thus David expects to enjoy his safety continually. For nothing is more desirable than that God should be upon the watch for us, that our life may be surrounded by his protecting care. The wicked, indeed, regard themselves as secure, the farther they are from God; but the godly consider themselves happy in this one thing, that He directs the whole tenor of their life. God being the

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preserver of his life, David declares that he shall live. In adding, *in the land of the living*, he means to point out to us the course that we are expected to pursue; and that, almost every moment of time, fresh destructions press upon us, if he overlook us.

10. *I have believed, therefore I will speak :*[1] *I am afflicted very sore.*
11. *I said in my fear, Every man is a liar.*[2]

10. *I have believed.* That his wonderful deliverance may appear the more conspicuous, he again relates the imminent danger in which he had been placed. He begins by declaring that he spake in the true sincerity of his heart, and that nothing proceeded from his lips but what was the fruit of long reflection, and mature deliberation. Such is the import of the clause, *I have believed, therefore I will speak;* words which proceed from the full affection of the heart. In 2 Cor. iv. 13, Paul, quoting this passage, follows the Greek version, "I believed, therefore I have spoken." I have elsewhere remarked that it was not the design of the apostles to repeat every word and syllable; it is enough for us that the words of David are appropriately applied in their proper and natural sense to the subject to which Paul there refers. Having referred indirectly to the Corinthians, who were exalting themselves above the clouds, as if they had been exempted from the common lot of mankind, "I believed," says he, "and therefore I have spoken, that he who hath once raised Christ from the dead, will also extend Christ's life to us;"

[1] "'I believed, therefore have I spoken;' I firmly believe what I say, therefore I make no scruple of saying it. This should be connected with the preceding verse, and the full stop should be placed at 'spoken.'"—*Horsley.*

[2] Horsley's version of this verse is as follows:—"'In an ecstacy of despair, I said, the whole race of man is a delusion.' 'A delusion,' *a lie, a cheat, a thing of nothing, made to no purpose.* So Mudge understands this latter part. He judiciously observes, that the prefixed ה necessarily determines the phrase, כל האדם, to the collective sense of the whole race. *Every man*, or *all men*, should be כל אדם, without ה." Fry similarly translates, "The entire of the manhood is a lie; or," he observes, "(as the word we render *lie* signifies,) a thing *failing* and disappointing the hopes built upon it."

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that is, I believe, and therefore I speak. Thus he charges the Corinthians with being inflated with foolish pride, because they do not humbly submit to the cross of Christ; especially as they ought to speak in the exercise of the same spirit of faith with himself. The particle כִּי, *ki*, which we translate *therefore*, is by some Hebrew interpreters understood as a disjunctive particle; but the more correct meaning, and which is supported by the best scholars, is, I will speak nothing but the sentiments of my heart. The drift of the passage, too, requires this; namely, that the external professions of the lips correspond with the internal feelings of the heart: for many talk inconsiderately, and utter what never entered into their hearts. "Let no person imagine that I employ unmeaning or exaggerated terms; what I speak, the same I have truly believed." From this we learn the useful doctrine, that faith cannot remain inoperative in the heart, but that it must, of necessity, manifest itself. Here the Holy Spirit unites, with a sacred bond, the faith of the heart with outward confession; and "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Those dissemblers, therefore, who spontaneously envelop their faith in obscurity, treacherously corrupt the whole Word of God. We must remember, however, that the order which David here observes is demanded of all God's children, their believing, before they make any professions with their lips. But, as I said, he speaks of his imminent danger, that he may the more enhance the safety and deliverance which God had vouchsafed to him.

11. *I said in my fear.* Some take the word חָפַז, *chaphaz*, to denote *haste* or *flight*, and consider it as expressive of what David said when he fled in great haste from the face of Saul. But, as it figuratively signifies *fear*, I have no doubt that David here declares that he felt astonished and dejected in spirit, as if he were upon the brink of a precipice, ready to tumble into the abyss. He acknowledges that, when he was so dreadfully harassed in mind, his heart had almost sunk within him. Annotators are not agreed about the meaning of the second member of the verse. One class holding that David declares that he doubted the promise of the kingdom

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made to him by the prophet Samuel. That Samuel was a competent witness, admits of no question; but when David saw himself banished from his native country, and constantly exposed to death in various forms, he might be overtaken by the temptation that he had been vainly and ineffectually anointed by Samuel. According to them, the meaning is—I had almost perished in my flight, and the promise given me fled away; and, moreover, I had been deceived by delusive hope. Another class, putting an opposite interpretation upon this passage, assert that David surmounted the temptation; so that, when Satan by his wiles wished to make him despair, he instantly recovered himself; and removed all occasion of unbelief in the following manner: "What art thou doing, miserable man that thou art, and whither art thou hastening? Darest thou, even indirectly, impute falsehood to God? Nay, rather let Him be true, and let vanity, and falsehood, and perfidy, lie at thine own door." My own opinion is, that this doctrine is to be understood more generally, that David did not intend this prediction directly for himself; but, his mind being perplexed, he inadvertently entangled himself in the snares of Satan, and was unable to place his confidence any where. The faithful often stagger, and Satan bringing them into a state of deep darkness, the word of God almost forsakes them; still they do not abandon their confidence, nor deliberately charge God with falsehood, but rather keep their evil thoughts under restraint. The verb *to say*, among the Hebrews, is expressive of firm persuasion, as we say in French, *J'ay conclu, ou resolu*, "I have concluded, or resolved;" and, therefore, we are to understand that this temptation could not enter David's heart, without his instantly withstanding it. Consequently, the view which I have given of the passage is the proper one, That David did not see God during this season of mental darkness. The faithful do not deliberately speak against God, or ask whether he be true or not, nor does this horrid blasphemy completely engross their thoughts; but, on the contrary, as often as it arises, they banish it from them, and hold it in abhorrence. Nevertheless, it occasionally happens that they are so troubled, that they behold nothing except vanity and falsehood. Such was

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David's experience during this fear and trouble; he felt as if a dense fog obstructed his vision. "There is no certainty, no security. What shall I think? In what shall I confide? To what shall I have recourse?" Frequently do the faithful thus reason with themselves, there is no trust to be reposed in men. A veil is spread over their eyes, which, preventing them from seeing the light of God, causes them to grovel upon the earth, till, being elevated above the heavens, they begin anew to discern the truth of God.

The design of David, as I formerly observed, is in all respects to magnify the grace of God; and for this purpose, in speaking of his trials, he acknowledges that he did not deserve divine help and comfort; for he ought to have recollected, that, depending on the prophecy, he would have risen superior to all unbelief. This, he says, he did not do, because, owing to the perturbation of his mind, he could see nothing but vanity. If his faith was shaken in this violent manner, what will we do if God do not support and sustain us? This is not meant to keep the faithful in suspense between doubt and uncertainty, but rather to make them call more earnestly upon God. We ought to consider this trial attentively, for we can form no conception of these assaults until we actually experience them. Let us at the same time remember, that David's attack was only temporary, continuing while he was perplexed with doubt, in consequence of the prophecy having escaped from his recollection.

12. *What shall I render unto Jehovah? all his benefits are upon me.*
13. *I will take the cup of salvation,*[1] *and call upon the name of Jehovah.*
14. *I will pay my vows to Jehovah now in the presence of all his people.*

12. *What shall I render unto Jehovah?* He now exclaims with devout admiration, that the multitude of God's benefits was greater than he could find language to give expression to

[1] "C'est, des deliverances."—*Fr. marg.* "That is, of deliverances."

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the grateful emotions of his heart. The question is emphatic, *What shall I render?* and imports, that it was not the desire, but the means, of which he was destitute, to enable him to render thanks to God. Acknowledging his inability, he adopts the only means in his power, by extolling the grace of God as highly as he could. "I am exceedingly wishful to discharge my duty, but when I look around me, I find nothing which will prove an adequate recompense." Some understand the phrase, *upon me*, to intimate, that David had the recollection of all the benefits which God bestowed on him deeply engraven upon his mind. Others, along with the LXX., supply the particle *for*, *What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits towards me?* But it is much better to make the first clause of the verse a complete sentence, by putting a period after *Jehovah*. Because, after confessing his incompetency, or rather his having nothing to offer to God as a sufficient compensation for his benefits, he at the same time adds in confirmation of it, that he was laid under such obligations, not by one series of benefits only, but by a variety of innumerable benefits. "There is no benefit on account of which God has not made me a debtor to him, how should I have means of repaying him for them?" All recompense failing him, he has recourse to an expression of thanksgiving as the only return which he knows will be acceptable to God. David's example in this instance teaches us not to treat God's benefits lightly or carelessly, for if we estimate them according to their value, the very thought of them ought to fill us with admiration. There is not one of us who has not God's benefits heaped upon us. But our pride, which carries us away into extravagant theories, causes us to forget this very doctrine, which ought nevertheless to engage our unremitting attention. And God's bounty towards us merits the more praise, that he expects no recompense from us, nor can receive any, for he stands in need of nothing, and we are poor and destitute of all things.

13. *The cup of salvation.* He refers to a custom which was prevalent under the Law. For when they rendered solemn thanks to God, a feast was also appointed, at which, in token

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of their gladness, there was an holy libation. This being a symbol of their deliverance from Egyptian thraldom, is for that reason here called the *cup of salvation*.[1] The term *to call upon*, signifies to celebrate the name of God; and this he expresses more plainly, subsequently, by saying that he would *pay his vows in the assembly of the faithful*, the sanctuary alone being the place where sacrifices could be offered. The amount is, that the faithful need not be greatly perplexed about the way of performing their duties, God not demanding from them a return which he knows they are unable to give, but being satisfied with a bare and simple acknowledgment. The proper return is to own our obligation to him for every thing. If God deal so kindly and mercifully with us, and we fail in giving to him the tribute of praise for our deliverance which he claims, then our supineness becomes the more base. And certainly they are unworthy of the en-

[1] That there is here an allusion to the cup of wine drunk in the offering of eucharistical sacrifices is very generally admitted by commentators. During the feast that followed these sacrifices, the master of the family took a cup of wine into his hands, and after solemnly giving thanks to God for the mercies experienced, first drank of it himself, and then delivered it to all present to be partaken of in rotation. "The cup here spoken of by the Psalmist," says Cresswell, "was probably used by the master of a Hebrew family at an entertainment in his own house, at which the remainder of the victims was eaten, after he had offered (Lev. vii. 11, &c.) the sacrifice of a peace-offering for a thanksgiving; when, lifting up the cup of wine in his hand, he called upon the name of the Lord, giving him thanks. The modern Jews are said to use a similar ceremony every year in commemoration of the deliverance of their ancestors from the bondage of Egypt." Some, indeed, deny that there is any allusion to such eucharistical sacrifices, as Hengstenberg, who observes, that this communion cup is *a mere fiction*. In the institution of the festival offerings, nothing is indeed said of the cup; but we know from Matth. xxvi. 29, 30, that in the feast of the Passover, for instance, the drinking of a cup of wine and the singing of a hymn were parts of the observance. From Jewish tradition we also learn that such was the ancient practice. See Lightfoot's Horæ Hebraicæ on Matth. xxvi. Our Lord, apparently in imitation of the Jewish custom, as the head of the family, at the feast of the Passover, "took the cup, and gave thanks," (Luke xxii. 17.) In allusion to this custom, Paul calls the communion cup in the Lord's Supper "the cup of blessing," (1 Cor. x. 16.) The Psalmist, then, here intimates his intention of publicly yielding thanks to God for the mercies bestowed upon him.

There was a libation of wine enjoined by the Mosaic law to be made in the temple every morning and evening for a drink-offering, (Num. xxviii. 7,) to which some suppose there is here a reference, observing, that the three last verses seem to intimate, that the Psalmist was now at the temple, offering the meat-offering, drink-offering, and sacrifices, to the Lord.

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joyment, I say not of the riches of the world, but of the light of the sun and the air by which we breathe and live, who would rob the Author of them of the small return which so legitimately belongs to him. The Mosaic ritual has indeed been abrogated, and along with it the external libation referred to by David, yet the spiritual service, as we found in Ps. l. 23, "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me," is still in force. Let us, however, bear in mind, that God is lawfully praised by us, when we offer in sacrifice not only our tongues, but also ourselves, and all that we possess. And this not because God derives any profit from it, but because it is reasonable that our gratitude should manifest itself in this way.

14. *I will pay my vows unto Jehovah.* The stedfastness of his piety shines forth in this, that, in the midst of his dangers, he had vowed unto God. And now he proves that he by no means forgot these engagements, as most men do, who, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them, implore his help for a short time, but soon bury in oblivion the deliverance which they have received. The Holy Spirit, speaking of the true worship of God, very properly connects, by an indissoluble bond, these two parts of worship, "Call upon me in the day of trouble;" and, "after thy deliverance glorify me," Ps. l. 15. If any regard it as an absurdity for the faithful to enter into covenant with God by making vows to him, to procure his approbation, my reply is, that they do not promise the sacrifice of praise, to soothe him by their flatteries, as if he were a mortal like themselves, or to bind him to them by proposing some reward, for David had previously protested that he would not offer any recompense. The design, then, and the use of vows is, first, That the children of God may have their hearts strengthened with the confidence of obtaining whatever they ask; and, secondly, That they may be stimulated the more to offer up their tribute of gratitude to God for his mercies. To aid the children of God in their infirmity, the privilege of vowing may surely be conceded to them, for by this means their most merciful Father condescends to allow them to enter into familiar converse with him, provided they make their vows for the object I have stated. Happen what

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may, nothing must be attempted without his permission. And hence the Papists appear the more ridiculous, who, under pretext of what is advanced in this place, defend all sorts of vows, however foolish and absurd and rashly made; as if drunkenness were lawful, because God permits us to eat.

15. *Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his meek ones.*
16. *Come, O Jehovah! because I am thy servant; I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid: thou hast broken my fetters.*
17. *I will sacrifice the sacrifices of praise to thee, and call upon the name of Jehovah.*[1]
18. *I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people,*
19. *In the courts of the house of Jehovah, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem! Praise ye Jehovah.*

15. *Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of his meek ones.* He goes on now to the general doctrine of God's providential care for the godly, in that he renders them assistance in time of need; their lives being precious in his sight. With this shield he desires to defend himself from the terrors of death, which often pressed upon him, by which he imagined he would instantly be swallowed up. When we are in danger, and God apparently overlooks us, we then consider ourselves to be contemned as poor slaves, and that our life is regarded as a thing of nought. And we are aware that when the wicked perceive that we have no protection, they wax the more bold against us, as if God took no notice either of our life or death. In opposition to their erroneous doctrine, David introduces this sentiment, that God does not hold his servants in so little estimation as to expose them to death casually.[2] We may indeed for a time be subjected to all the

[1] "This seems to mean the sacrifice prescribed, Lev. vii. 12, because the courts of the Lord's house are mentioned. Ps. l. 23, and lvi. 12, perhaps mean only thanksgiving, as Ps. lxix. 30, certainly doth. See verse 31."—*Archbishop Secker.*

[2] "For their death to be precious is, in effect, no more than that it is, so considered, rated at so high a price by God, as that he will not easily grant it to any one that most desires it of him. Absalom here hostilely pursued David and desired his death, he would have been highly gratified with it, taking it for the greatest boon that could have befallen him: but God would not thus gratify him; nor will he grant this desire easily

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vicissitudes of fortune and of the world; we will nevertheless always have this consolation, that God will, eventually, openly manifest how dear our souls are to him. In these times, when innocent blood is shed, and the wicked contemners of God furiously exalt themselves, as if exulting over a vanquished God, let us hold fast by this doctrine, that the death of the faithful, which is so worthless, nay, even ignominious in the sight of men, is so valuable in God's sight, that, even after their death, he stretches out his hand towards them, and by dreadful examples demonstrates how he holds in abhorrence the cruelty of those who unjustly persecute the good and simple. If he put their tears in a bottle, how will he permit their blood to perish? Ps. lvi. 8. At his own time he will accomplish the prediction of Isaiah, "that the earth shall disclose her blood," xxvi. 21. To leave room for the grace of God, let us put on the spirit of meekness, even as the prophet, in designating the faithful *meek ones*, calls upon them to submit their necks quietly to bear the burden of the cross, that in their patience they may possess their souls, Luke xxi. 19.

16. *Come, O Jehovah! because I am thy servant.* As, in the former verse, he gloried that in him God had given an example of the paternal regard which he has for the faithful, so here he applies, in an especial manner, to himself the general doctrine, by declaring that his *fetters had been broken*, in consequence of his being included among the number of God's servants. He employs the term *fetters*, as if one, with hands and feet bound, were dragged by the executioner. In assigning, as the reason of his deliverance, that he was God's servant, he by no means vaunts of his services, but rather refers to God's unconditional election; for we cannot make ourselves his servants, that being an honour conferred upon us solely by his adoption. Hence David affirms, that he was not God's servant merely, but the *son of his handmaid.* "From the womb of my mother, even before I was born, was this honour conferred upon me." He therefore presents him-

to the enemies of godly men, especially of those that commit themselves to his keeping, as David here did."—*Hammond.*

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self as a common example to all who shall dedicate themselves to the service of God, and place themselves under his protection, that they may be under no apprehension for their safety while they have him for their defence.

17. *I will sacrifice the sacrifices of praise to thee.* He once more repeats what he had said about gratitude, and that publicly; for we must manifest our piety, not only by our secret affection before God, but also by an open profession in the sight of men. David, along with the people, observed the rites of the law, knowing that these, at that time, were not unmeaning services; but while he did this, he had a particular reference to the purpose for which they were appointed, and offered principally the sacrifices of praise and the calves of his lips. He speaks of the *courts of God's house*, because at that time there was but one altar from which it was unlawful to depart, and it was the will of God that the holy assemblies should be held there, that the faithful might mutually stimulate one another to the cultivation of godliness.

PSALM CXVII.

1. *Praise Jehovah, all ye nations; magnify him, all ye peoples.*[1]

[1] "That *all the nations* here, and in the next word *all peoples*, signify, in the greatest latitude, all the nations, all people of the Gentile world, even πάσαν κτίσιν, 'the whole creation,' and κόσμον ἅπαντα, 'the whole world,' Mark xvi. 15, appears both by Matth. xxviii. 19, where, parallel to those phrases in St Mark, is no more than πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 'all the nations,' as here; but especially by Rom. xv., where, for a proof of God's purpose that the Gentiles should be received into the Church, and join with the believing Jews in one concert of Christian love and faith, and *praise* God together in the same congregation, the proof is brought, as from several other texts, so from these words in this psalm. And this not only by expressly citing, ver. 1, 'And again praise the Lord, all ye nations, and laud him, all ye people;' but also in the front of the testimonies, by the phrases, 'for the truth of God,' ver. 8, 'for the mercy *or* pity of God,' ver. 9, both which are here mentioned, ver. 2."—*Hammond.*

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2. *Because his mercy is strengthened*[1] *towards us ; and the truth of Jehovah remains for ever. Praise ye Jehovah.*

1. *Praise Jehovah, all ye nations.* The Holy Spirit having, by the mouth of the prophet, exhorted all nations to celebrate the praises of God's mercy and faithfulness, Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, very justly considers this as a prediction respecting the calling of the whole world, (xv. 11.) How can unbelievers be qualified for praising God, who, though not entirely destitute of his mercy, yet are insensible of it, and are ignorant of his truth? It would therefore serve no purpose for the prophet to address the heathen nations, unless they were to be gathered together in the unity of the faith with the children of Abraham. There is no ground for the censorious attempting, by their sophistical arguments, to refute the reasoning of Paul. I grant that the Holy Spirit elsewhere calls upon the mountains, rivers, trees, rain, winds, and thunder, to resound the praises of God, because all creation silently proclaims him to be its Maker. It is in a different manner that he is praised by his rational creatures. The reason assigned is, that *God's mercy and truth* furnish materials for celebrating his praises. Besides, the prophet does not mean that God shall be praised everywhere by the Gentiles, because the knowledge of his character is confined to a small portion of the land of Judea, but because it was to be spread over the whole world. First, he enjoins God to be praised, *because his goodness is increased*, or *strengthened*, for the Hebrew term admits of both meanings. Secondly, *because his truth remains stedfast for ever.* How, then, are those qualified to celebrate his praises, who, with brutal insensibility, pass over his goodness, and shut their ears against his heavenly doctrine?

The *truth* of God, in this passage, is properly introduced as an attestation of his grace. For he can be true even when he menaces the whole world with perdition and ruin. The prophet, however, has placed his *mercy* first in order, that his faithfulness and truth, comprising an assurance of his

[1] "Ou, multipliee."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, multiplied."

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paternal kindness, might encourage the hearts of the godly. His power and justice are equally praiseworthy; but as men will never cordially praise God until they are drawn by a foretaste of his goodness, the prophet very justly selects God's mercy and truth, which alone open the mouths of those who are mute to engage in this exercise. When his truth is said to be *everlasting*, it is not set in opposition to his mercy, as if it, after flourishing for a season, then instantly passed away. The same reason would go to prove, that it was small compared with his mercy, which is said to be abundant. The meaning is, that God's mercy is rich towards us, flowing in a perennial stream, because united to his eternal truth. If we read, *his mercy is confirmed*, all difficulty will be removed, for then both constancy and stability will alike adorn his mercy and his truth.

PSALM CXVIII.

At the time when this psalm was penned, whenever that was, David having attained to the possession of royal power, and aware that he reigned for the common safety of the Church, calls upon all the children of Abraham to ponder attentively this grace. He also recounts his dangers, the magnitude and variety of which would have slain him a hundred times, had not God wonderfully succoured him. From this it is obvious that he came to the throne of the kingdom, neither by his own policy, nor by the favour of men, nor by any human means. At the same time, he informs us that he did not rashly or by wicked intrigues rush forward and take forcible possession of the kingdom of Saul, but that he was appointed and established king by God himself. Let us remember that it was the design of the Spirit, under the figure of this temporal kingdom, to describe the eternal and spiritual kingdom of God's Son, even as David represented his person.[1]

[1] Calvin ascribes this psalm to David; but, as it is without any title, it is uncertain who was its author. On this point, and the occasion of its composition, various opinions prevail among commentators. According to Hengstenberg, it celebrates the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and the laying the foundation of the second temple; in support of which he refers to Ezra iii. 11. Phillips thinks it "probable that it was written for the occasion when David was to be anointed

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1. *Praise ye Jehovah; because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.*
2. *Let Israel now*[1] *say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*
3. *Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*
4. *Let those who fear Jehovah now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*

1. *Praise ye Jehovah.* In this passage we see that David does not merely in a private capacity render thanks to God, but that he loudly summons the people to engage in the common exercises of piety. This he does, not simply from

at Hebron king over the tribes of Israel, (2 Sam. v.;) for, previously to his inauguration, he was subjected to many dangers, both from avowed foes, as well as from Saul and his party. He was exposed to the hostility of the Philistines (1 Sam. xxix.) and the Amalekites, (1 Sam. xxx.;) from the former he escaped in safety, and the latter he overcame in battle. Again, although he had been long chosen king of Israel by God, for a considerable period he was exposed to a severe persecution; he was obliged to flee for safety from his country, and it was not till after the death of Saul that his troubles ceased, and he ascended the throne, which had long been his by Divine appointment. To David, therefore, at Hebron, this psalm will apply; for he could then say, 'All nations compassed me about. The Lord hath chastised me, but he hath not given me over unto death. The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.'" Some assign it to the time of Hezekiah; and others to that period of Israel's history, which is adorned by the illustrious achievements of the Maccabees. "I shall not presume," says Walford, "to decide which of these opinions is the most agreeable to truth. It will be more to our purpose to observe, that the psalm was read on occasion of a solemn procession that was formed by the king or chief magistrate, whoever he might be, the priests and the people at large, of all ranks, in order to perform public sacrifices of thanksgiving at the temple."

[1] Horsley very properly translates the Hebrew word נָא, *na*, in this and the two following verses, by *O*, instead of *now*:—"O, Let Israel say—O, Let the house of Aaron say—O, Let them that fear Jehovah say." "The word *now*," he observes, "in our language is a particle of entreaty, and is therefore used by our translators to express the supplicatory particle of the Hebrew language, נָא. But though *now*, in our language, is indeed a particle of entreaty, it is only when the verb is in the imperative mood, and in the second person; as, 'Do, now, grant me this favour;' or, at least, in speaking to the person of whom the thing is asked. When נָא is joined to a verb in the third person, or when the person who is to grant the petition, or perform the thing advised, is not immediately addressed, it should be rendered by some other word or phrase. 'By all means,' or 'of all things,' are equivalent phrases, in respect of the sense, but not sufficiently dignified to suit the style of sacred poetry. *O* is perhaps the best particle, in these cases, that our language furnishes."

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his having been divinely appointed to be the captain and teacher of others; but, God having invested him with royal power, had manifested his sympathy with his distressed Church. Hence he exhorts the Israelites to magnify the grace of God, under whose kind protection he appears to re-establish them in safety. In the beginning of the psalm he alludes generally to the goodness and mercy of God, but he shortly instances himself as an evidence of his goodness, as will be seen in its proper place. It becomes us at present to recall to mind what I mentioned in the preceding psalm, that a reason for praising God is given to us on account of his mercy, in preference to his power or justice; because, though his glory shine forth in them also, yet will we never promptly and heartily sound forth his praises, until he win us by the sweetness of his goodness. Accordingly, in Psalm li. 17, we found that the lips of the faithful were opened to praise God, when they perceived that he was truly their deliverer. In restricting his address to Israel, and to the children of Aaron, he is guided by a regard to his own times, because, up to that period, the adoption did not extend beyond that one nation. He again resumes the order which he observed in Psalm cxvi.; for, after exhorting the children of Abraham, who had been separated from the Gentiles by the election of God, and also the sons of Aaron, who, by virtue of the priesthood, ought to take the precedence in conducting the psalmody, he directs his discourse to the other worshippers of God; because there were many hypocrites among the Israelites, who, occupying a place in the Church, were yet strangers to it. This is not inconsistent with David's here speaking by the spirit of prophecy, respecting the future kingdom of Christ. That kingdom, no doubt, extended to the Gentiles, but its commencement and first-fruits were among God's chosen people.

5. *I called upon God in my distress, and God heard me, by setting me at large.*
6. *Jehovah is with me: I will not fear what man may do unto me.*
7. *Jehovah is with me among those who help me, and I shall see my desire upon mine enemies.*

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8. *It is better to hope in Jehovah than to confide in man ;*
9. *It is better to hope in Jehovah than to confide in princes.*

5. *I called upon God in my distress.* We have here a particular application of the doctrine we formerly mentioned, to the person of David; with which also is conjoined the rejoicing of the whole Church, for whose public welfare God made provision by upholding him. By his own example he establishes the faithful, showing them that they ought not to faint in the day of adversity. He seems designedly to anticipate an objection, which is apt to arise in the minds of men the moment that the goodness of God is proclaimed, "Why does he permit his servants to be so sore oppressed and afflicted?" David therefore reminds them, notwithstanding, that God's mercy never fails, for we have in prayer a consolation and an antidote for all our ills. The season, too, in which he says that he made supplication, by means of which he obtained deliverance, was that of distress, which teaches us that the time of sad adversity is most proper for abounding in prayer.

6. *Jehovah is with me among those who help me.* Confiding solely in God's help, he sets at defiance not a few enemies merely, but the whole world. "Defended by God's hand, I may boldly and safely set at nought all the machinations of men." When all the power of the universe is deemed as nothing, in comparison of God, then, indeed, is due honour attributed to him. Thus he tacitly reproves the unbelief of almost all men, who spontaneously alarm themselves with groundless fears. All, indeed, desire peace of mind; but, in consequence of robbing God of the praise due to his power, their own ingratitude does not permit them to realise this blessing. Were they, as is fitting, to submit in all things to the good pleasure and power of God, they would be always ready boldly to surmount all those difficulties, the dread of which from time to time annoys them. But paying more regard to the mischievous attempts of men, than to the help which God can give them, they deserve to tremble at the rustling of the falling leaf. It is the wish of David, by

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his own example, to correct such perversity; and, with this view, he affirms that, in the enjoyment of God's favour, he would fear no man, being fully persuaded that he could rescue him from all the nefarious plots which were laid for him. Or if he composed this psalm after his deliverance, we see how much he had profited by the experience of the grace of God. Therefore, as frequently as God shall succour us, let our confidence in him for the future be increased, and let us not be unmindful of his goodness and power, which we experienced in our extremity. Possibly, he relates the meditations which occurred to him in the midst of his distresses; the former conjecture appears more probable, that, after he obtained deliverance, he gloried, for the future, in God's continued assistance. Some refer the clause, *those who are helpers with me*, to the small troop which David had drawn to him; but this, in my opinion, is too refined; for it would tend little to the honour of God to class him among the six hundred whom David commanded, as if he were one of the troop. My interpretation is more simple, that he calls God his helper. "It is enough for me that God is on my side." Were he deprived of all human aid, still he would have no hesitation in opposing God against all his enemies.

8. *It is better to trust in Jehovah.* He appears to state nothing but what is common-place, it being unanimously admitted, that when God and men come into comparison, he must be viewed as infinitely exalted above them, and therefore it is best to trust in him for the aid which he has promised to his own people. All make this acknowledgment, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who is fully persuaded that God alone can afford him sufficient help. That man has attained a high rank among the faithful, who, resting satisfied in God, never ceases to entertain a lively hope, even when he finds no help upon earth. The comparison, however, is improper, inasmuch as we are not allowed to transfer to men even the smallest portion of our confidence, which must be placed in God alone. The meaning is by no means ambiguous; the Psalmist is ridiculing the illusory hopes of men by which they are tossed hither and thither;

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and declares, that when the world smiles upon them they wax proud, and either forsake God or despise him. Some are of opinion that David bitterly reproaches his enemies with their being deceived in depending upon the favour of Saul. This appears to me to be too limited a view of the passage; and I question not that David here proposes himself as an example to all the faithful; in that he had reaped the full fruit of his hope, when, depending solely upon God, he had patiently borne the loss of all earthly succour. In the 9th verse, in which he substitutes *princes* for *men*, there is an extension of the idea. "Not only those who put their confidence in men of low degree act foolishly, but also those who confide even in the greatest potentates; for the trust that is put in flesh shall at last be accursed, but the enjoyment of God's favour will convert even death itself into life."

10. *All nations compassed me: but in the name of Jehovah I will surely cut them off.*
11. *They compassed me; yea, they compassed me: in Jehovah's name I will surely cut them off.*
12. *They compassed me as bees: they are quenched*[1] *as a fire of thorns: in Jehovah's name I will surely cut them off.*

[1] The verb דעכו, *doachu*, here used has ordinarily the signification of *to quench*. But in this text it is rendered in all the old versions in the sense of *to burn*. "This makes it probable," says Hammond, "that as many other words in the Hebrew language are used in contrary senses, so דעך, which signifies in other places passively *to be consumed*, or *extinguished*, may signify here as an ἐναντιόσημον, *to flame*, or in an active sense, as in Arabic it is used, *violently to break in* or *set upon*, as in war or contention when men violently rush one on another." And this seems most suitable to the connection in which it stands. At first sight one would think it strange to say that the adversaries of David *were quenched (i. e.*, destroyed) *as the fire of thorns;* and for the Psalmist afterwards to state, *In the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off*. If the verb is here interpreted in the sense of *to burn*, the main object of the metaphor must be to express, by a figure frequently employed in Scripture, the impotence and quick termination of the rage of those men, however fierce and apparently formidable. It would soon expend itself, and their power of doing injury be lost like a fire of thorns, which, although for a moment it makes a great crackling, and rages violently as if it would quickly consume every thing near, soon ceases, and nothing remains but the ashes. If the verb is understood in the sense of *to quench*, the language is very elliptical, and in the true genius of Hebrew poetry, which frequently couches in a few words such images as in the hands of Homer would be materials for an

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13. *Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me, that I might fall:*[1] *but Jehovah helped me.*
14. *God is my strength and song, and he hath saved me.*

10. *All nations compassed me.* In these verses he relates the wonderful deliverance which he had received, that all might know that it was not of human but divine origin. Once and again he declares, that he was compassed not by a few persons, but by a vast multitude. The people, being all inflamed with anger and fury against him, compassed him so that there were no means for his escape, and he could procure help from no quarter but from heaven. Some consider his complaint, that all nations were adverse to him, as referring to the neighbouring nations, by whom we know David was surrounded with danger. His meaning, in my opinion, is, that the whole world was adverse to him; because he places God's help alone in opposition to the deadly and furious hatred both of his own countrymen and of the neighbouring nations towards him, so that there was not a spot upon the earth where he could be safe. There was, it is true, no army,

enlarged and dignified description, while it leaves unexpressed more than half of what is intended to be understood. The sudden quenching of the hostile army, like the extinction of a fire of thorns, implies the previous comparison of such array to a fire. "It is remarkable that, in a similar connection, Homer has such a comparison of an hostile army to fire, in which he *expresses* what David left to be understood, and omits (for he had no occasion to introduce) what David expresses, namely, the sudden quenching of the fire:—

'As when devouring flames some forest seize
On the high mountains, splendid from afar
The blaze appears, so, moving in the plain,
The steel-clad host innum'rous flash'd to heav'n.'
Iliad ii. 516. *Cowper.*"

—*Illustrated Commentary upon the Bible.*

[1] Hammond reads, "Thou hast thrust sore at me to ruin *or* falling." "The full import of לִנְפֹּל," says he, "is best expressed gerundially, *ad cadendum, to falling*, not only to express their desire who thus pressed and thrust at him, *that* he might fall, for that is supposed in the violence of their impulsion, expressed by repetition of the verb דחיתני דחה, *thou hast by thrusting thrust me*, but to signify the event or success of it, that *I was falling*, or *ready to fall.* τον πεσειν, say the LXX. in the infinitive mood gerundially, and so the Chaldee and the Syriac; and so the Jewish Arab, 'It is a long while that thou hast driven *or* thrust me to falling.' And this expresses the greatness and seasonableness of the deliverance, that when he was falling, God helped him."

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collected from several nations, besieging him; still he had no peaceable retreat except among the haunts of wild beasts, from which also he was driven by terror. And in proportion to the number of persons he encountered were the snares laid to entrap him. It is, therefore, not wonderful that he said he was compassed by all nations. Besides, this elliptical mode of speaking is more forcible than if he had merely said that he trusted in God, by reason of which he had become victorious. By publicly mentioning *the name of God* alone, he maintains that no other means of deliverance were within his reach, and that but for his interposition he must have perished. It appears to me preferable to translate the particle כִּי, *ki*, affirmatively.[1] "Besieged as I am on all sides by the world, yet if the power of God help me, that will be more than adequate for the extermination of all mine enemies." Their obstinate and implacable hatred is pointed out by him in the repetition of the phrase *compassed about*, and their outrageous fury is set forth in comparing them to *bees*, which, though not possessed of much strength, are very fierce, and when in their insensate fury they attack a person, they occasion no little fear. He shortly adds, *they are quenched as a fire of thorns*, which at first makes a great crackling, and throws out a greater flame than a fire of wood, but soon passes away. The amount is, that David's enemies had furiously assailed him, but that their fury soon subsided. Hence he again repeats, that sustained by the power of God, whatever opposition might rise against him would soon pass away.

13. *Thou hast sorely thrust at me.* He either now changes the person, or directs his discourse to Saul, his principal enemy. In the person of one, he sets at defiance all his enemies together. In saying that he *had been thrust at*, he admits that he did not withstand the onset by his own bravery, as those who are powerful enough to encounter opposition, sustain the assaults of their enemies without flinching. The power of God is more illustriously displayed in raising him up even from ruin itself.

[1] "I take כִּי to be an affirmative adverb, *surely*, and not a conjunction."—*Lowth.*

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In the subsequent verse he draws the conclusion that God is *his strength and song*. By the former adjunct he candidly acknowledges his weakness, and ascribes his safety exclusively to God. And having admitted that his strength was in God alone, because he was sustained by his power, immediately he adds, that God is *his praise* or *his song*, which must be understood passively. "In myself there was no ground for boasting, to God belongs entirely all the praise of my safety." The last clause of the verse, in which he says that *God was his salvation*, refers to the same subject.

15. *The voice of shouting and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just: the right hand of Jehovah hath done valiantly.*
16. *The right hand of Jehovah is exalted, the right hand of Jehovah hath done valiantly.*
17. *I shall not die, yea, I shall live, and speak of the works of God.*
18. *God chastising has chastised me; but he did not deliver me unto death.*
19. *Open to me the gates of righteousness; and having entered into them, I will praise God.*
20. *This is the gate of Jehovah, the just shall enter into it.*
21. *I will praise thee, because thou hast heard me, and hast been my salvation.*

15. *The voice of shouting and salvation is in the tabernacles of the just.* He affirms that the kindness which God had conferred upon him was so extensive, that it would not do to render thanks to him privately. In the benefits which he had received, God's power appeared both remarkable and memorable, and the fruit of it also was extended to the whole Church. Therefore, as David's deliverance was wonderful and advantageous generally to all the godly, he promises that he would make a public thanksgiving; and invites them to join him in this holy exercise. By this circumstance, he chiefly aims at magnifying the grace of God, and also by its effects to demonstrate, that not merely his individual preservation, but that of the whole Church, in his person, was accomplished. Intercommunion among believers does, indeed, bind them alternately to render thanks to God for each other;

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in David's case, there was the special reason which I have mentioned, his wonderful preservation from many deaths, and his having assigned to him the sovereignty of God's chosen people. It is worthy of notice, that he combines the voice of joy and gladness with the praise of God, by which he shows that believers ought to mingle with their mirth a sense of the grace of God. *To do valiantly*, is tantamount to a magnificent display of his power, so that there may be a bright manifestation of its effulgence. God oftimes secretly, and when apparently feeble, grants deliverance to his faithful people, that they may be sensible that it comes from him; but this is not so well known to others. Here, however, David asserts that the operation of God was so plainly developed, no one could doubt whence his safety came. The other phrase, *that the right hand of God was exalted*, refers to the same subject, because, by working powerfully and unwontedly, God had exalted his hand.

17. *I shall not die.* David speaks like one emerging from the sepulchre. The very same person who says, *I shall not die*, acknowledges that he was rescued from death, to which he was near as one condemned to it. For a series of years his life was in imminent danger, exposed every moment to a thousand deaths, and no sooner was he delivered from one than he entered into another. Thus he declares that *he would not die*, because he regained life, all hope of which he had entirely abandoned. We, whose life is hid with Christ in God, ought to meditate upon this song all our days, Col. iii. 3. If we occasionally enjoy some relaxation, we are bound to unite with David in saying, that we who were surrounded with death are risen to newness of life. In the meantime, we must constantly persevere through the midst of darkness: as our safety lies in hope, it is impossible that it can be very visible to us. In the second member of the verse, he points out the proper use of life. God does not prolong the lives of his people, that they may pamper themselves with meat and drink, sleep as much as they please, and enjoy every temporal blessing, but to magnify him for his benefits which he is daily heaping upon them. Of this subject we have spoken on Psalm cxv.

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18. *In chastising God has chastised me.* In these words David owns that his enemies assailed him unjustly, that they were employed by God to correct him, that this was fatherly chastisement, God not inflicting a deadly wound, but correcting him in measure and in mercy. He seems to anticipate the perverse decisions of perverse men which grievously pressed upon him, as if all the ills which he had endured were so many evidences of his being cast off by God. These calumnies which the reprobate cast upon him he applies very differently, by declaring that his correction was mild and paternal. The main thing in adversity is to know that we are laid low by the hand of God, and that this is the way which he takes to prove our allegiance, to arouse us from our torpidity, to crucify our old man, to purge us from our filthiness, to bring us into submission and subjection to God, and to excite us to meditate on the heavenly life.

If these things were recollected by us, there is not one of us who would not shudder at the thought of fretting against God, but would much rather yield submission to him with a mild and meek spirit. Our champing the bit, and rushing forward impatiently, certainly proceeds from the majority of men not looking upon their afflictions as God's rods, and from others not participating in his paternal care. The last clause of the verse, therefore, merits particular attention, That God always deals mercifully with his own people, so that his correction proves their cure. Not that his paternal regard is always visible, but that in the end it will be shown that his chastisements, so far from being deadly, serve the purpose of a medicine, which, though it produce a temporary debility, rids us of our malady, and renders us healthy and vigorous.

19. *Open unto me the gates of righteousness.*[1] Under the influence of ardent zeal, David here sets himself to testify his gratitude, commanding the temple to be opened to him, as if the oblations were all already prepared. He now confirms what he said formerly, That he would render thanks to

[1] The gates of the temple, or doors of the tabernacle, are supposed to have been called *the gates of righteousness*, because they were intended for the reception of those only who were righteous.

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God publicly in the properly constituted assembly of the faithful. It was the practice of the priests to open the doors of the temple to the people; it appears, however, that David here alludes to his long exile, which supposition is corroborated by the following verse. Having been for a long period prevented from having access to the sanctuary, and even from coming within sight of it, he now rejoices and exults at being again admitted to offer sacrifice unto God. And he declares that he will not approach as the hypocrites were wont to do, whom God, by the prophet Isaiah, reproaches with treading his courts in vain, but that he will come with the sacrifice of praise, (Isa. i. 12.) Fully persuaded that he drew near in the spirit of genuine devotion, he says it is proper that the doors of the temple, which lately he durst not enter, should be opened to him and such as he. *It is*, says he, *the gate of Jehovah*, and, therefore, he will open it for the just. The meaning is, that banished as David had been from the temple and from his country, now that the kingdom is in a better condition, both he and all the true worshippers of God regained their right to approach his sanctuary. Thus he indirectly mourns over the profanation of the temple, in that, while under the tyranny of Saul, it was occupied by the profane contemners of God, as if it had been a kennel for dogs and other unclean animals. This abomination, the temple being for a long time a den of thieves, is here inveighed against; but now that it is patent to the righteous, he declares it to be God's holy house. What occurred in the days of Saul is visible in these days, God's bitter enemies most wickedly and shamefully occupying his sanctuary. The Pope would not be Antichrist if he did not sit in the temple of God, (2 Thess. ii. 4.) Having, by his vile pollutions, converted all temples into brothels, let us endeavour as much as we can to purge them, and prepare them for the pure worship of God. And as it has pleased Him to choose his holy habitation among us, let us exert ourselves to remove all the defilements and abominations which disfigure the purity of the Church. David then relates briefly the reason of his offering the sacrifice of praise to God, namely, that he had been preserved by his grace.

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22. *The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.*[1]
23. *This was done by Jehovah; it is marvellous in our eyes.*
24. *This is the day which Jehovah made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*
25. *I beseech thee, O Jehovah! save me; I beseech thee, I beseech thee, O Jehovah! give prosperity, I beseech thee.*
26. *Blessed is he who cometh in the name of Jehovah: we bless you out of the house of Jehovah.*

22. *The stone which the builders rejected.* In these words David boldly pours contempt on the calumnies with which he was unjustly and undeservedly assailed. As there was something ominous in his being condemned by the entire assemblage of the nobles, and all those who were invested with authority, and as the opinion was prevalent, that he was a wicked and rejected man; this error he deliberately refutes,

[1] The learned Michaelis understands this literally. "It appears," says he, "that, probably at the building of Solomon's temple, one of those stones, which David had taken care to get provided and made ready for use, was found fault with by the builders, and declared to be useless, and that God, for altogether different reasons, commanded by a prophet that this stone should be made the corner-stone. The Orientals regard the corner-stone as the one peculiarly holy stone in a temple, and that it confers sanctity upon the whole edifice. It is, therefore, the more probable that, either by the Urim and Thummim, (the sacred lot of the Jews,) or by a prophet, God was consulted which stone he would direct to be taken for the corner-stone. The answer was, that which they have perseveringly rejected, and declared to be quite unserviceable. Certainly it must have been for a very important reason, that God positively appointed this stone to be the corner-stone. But the New Testament declares it to us in Matth. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11; and 1 Peter ii. 7. The Jewish nation would conduct themselves towards the Messiah precisely as the builders did towards this stone, and would reject him; but God would select him to be the corner-stone, which should support and sanctify the whole Church."—Quoted in Dr Pye Smith *on the Priesthood of Christ*, p. 150. Michaelis' opinion, that the words literally relate to a stone which the builders at first rejected, but which they were subsequently induced to place in the most important part of the building, is, however, mere conjecture. The prophetic sense in which this verse is applicable to the Messiah, who was rejected by the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees of his time, and who is now the foundation of an ample and constantly increasing Church, rests on more solid grounds; being sanctioned both by Christ himself and his apostles.

The head stone of the corner does not mean the top stone, but the chief stone of the foundation, answering to what we call the first stone. —See Eph. ii. 20, 21; 1 Peter ii. 4, 5.

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and vindicates his innocence in the face of the principal men among them. "It is of little importance to me that I am abandoned by the chief men, seeing I have been visibly chosen by the judgment of God to be king over Israel." The similitude which he employs is appropriate, comparing himself to *a stone*, and the principal rulers of the Church to *master-builders*. It might, indeed, appear most irrational on his part to assert that the heads of the realm, to whom the government of the Church was intrusted, should be deprived of the Spirit of God, and divested of a sound judgment. Hence, in opposition to their perverse and erroneous judgment, he places the grace of God, declaring that he was placed by the purpose and power of God to sustain the whole building. In a word, he shows that splendid titles and high rank, in which his enemies glory, are no obstruction to him, because, relying upon the call of God, he possesses a glory superior to the verdict of the whole world. It being a difficult matter to persuade them of the truth of this, he magnifies and enlarges upon the grace of God, in order that its authority might suppress all evil speaking and clamorous surmises.

This, says he, *is the doing of Jehovah*. "Go and quarrel with God, all ye that strenuously endeavour to eject me from my throne, to which I have not been elevated accidentally, or by human policy, but by the manifest power of God." This he confirms by all being constrained to wonder at what had occurred as a thing incredible. Now, when God doeth marvellously, and in a manner that surpasses our comprehension, his power cannot fail to be so much the more apparent unto us. Should any prefer to interpret it thus:—Although this work may fill men with astonishment, yet that is no reason for rejecting it; he may do so. To me, however, it certainly appears more probable that David employs the term *wonderful*, that the haughtiness of man may submit to God, and that none may presume to breathe a whisper against him. The fitness of these things being applied to Christ will be more properly discussed when I come to consider the twenty-fifth verse.

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24. *This is the day which Jehovah made.* He now speaks of that as a happy and pleasant day, on which he was at last established king over Israel, and the anointing of him by Samuel ratified by this event. Doubtless all days were created alike by God, nevertheless David, by way of eminence, calls that *the day of God* which, after a long period of darkness, had dawned for the weal of the Church, because it was signalised by a notable event, deserving of being remembered by succeeding generations; and because the Church had thus emerged from a state of deep obscurity, he exhorts the faithful to mirth and joy, and that, too, by reason of the ignorance which many still displayed of the grace of God, or of their treating it with contempt, and of others being so fettered by their perverse attachment to Saul, that they could scarcely be brought to yield allegiance to David.

25. *I beseech thee, O Jehovah! save me.* As the term נָא, *na*, in Hebrew is frequently used as an adverb of time, not a few render it, in this place, *now:* Save, I beseech thee, now. It is also often used in the form of asking, and this is the meaning I attach to it, and which accords very well with this passage; for I am persuaded that the Holy Spirit, in repeating the same phrase, designed, by the mouth of the prophet, to stir up and stimulate the faithful to great earnestness and ardour in prayer. If any prefer a different interpretation, it will not be difficult to prevail on me to agree to it. One thing is plain, that there is here a form of prayer prescribed to the chosen people, to seek for prosperity to the kingdom of David, upon which the common safety of all depended. In these words, too, he protested that he held his kingdom by Divine legation, and, therefore, they who would not agree to wish prosperity to his reign were unworthy of occupying a place in the Church.

In the verse following, a particular request is subjoined, which the faithful must entertain; namely, that as God had thus appointed David to be the minister of his grace, so he would *also bless him.* Those are said to *come in the name of the Lord*, whom God employs for the welfare of his Church—such as prophets and teachers, whom he raises up to gather

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together his Church; and generals and governors, whom he instructs by his Spirit. But as David was a type of Christ, his case was peculiar; it being the will of God that his people should dwell under him and his successors till the advent of Christ. The clause, *blessed is he that cometh*, may be viewed as a form of congratulation; but seeing that the benediction of the priests is immediately annexed, I am disposed rather to believe that the people wished for David God's grace and favour. To induce them to present this petition with more alacrity, and thus be encouraged to receive the king whom God appointed them, this promise is added in the person of the priests, *We bless you out of the house of the Lord.*

They speak in this manner agreeably with the nature of their office, which enjoined on them the duty of blessing the people, as appears from several passages in the books of Moses, and particularly from Numbers vi. 23. It is not without reason that they connect the welfare of the Church with the prosperity of the kingdom, it being their desire to throw out the suggestion, and to represent that the safety of the people would remain as long as that kingdom continued to flourish, and that they would all share in the blessings which would be conferred upon their king, because of the indissoluble connection which exists between the head and members. Knowing, as we now do, that when David was constituted king, the foundation of that everlasting kingdom, which was eventually manifested in the advent of Christ, was then laid, and that the temporal throne upon which the descendants of David were placed was a type of the eternal kingdom given to Christ by God his Father, in consequence of which he obtained all power, both in heaven and on earth, there can be no question that the prophet calls upon the faithful to pray fervently and constantly for the prosperity and progress of this spiritual kingdom; for it was incumbent on those who lived during the shadowy dispensation to pray for David and his successors; but after all the grandeur of that kingdom was overthrown, it behoved them to entreat the more ardently that God, in fulfilment of his promise, would re-establish it. In short, all that is here stated properly relates to the person of Christ; and that

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which was dimly adumbrated in David was brightly represented and fulfilled in Christ. The election of David was secret; and after he was anointed by Samuel to be king, he was rejected by Saul, and by all the heads of the people, and all abhorred him as if he had been a person deserving of a hundred deaths. Thus disfigured and dishonoured, he did not appear to be a fit stone for occupying a place in the building. Similar to this was the beginning of the kingdom of Christ, who, being sent by his Father for the redemption of the Church, not only was despised by the world, but also hated and execrated, both by the common people and the dignitaries of the Church.

But it may be asked, how the prophet designates those master-builders who, so far from wishing the protection of the Church, aim at nothing so much as the demolition of the entire structure? We know, for instance, with what vehemence the scribes and priests, in Christ's time, laboured to subvert all true piety. The reply is not difficult. David refers solely to the office which they held, and not to the inclinations by which they were actuated. Saul and all his counsellors were subverters of the Church, and yet, in relation to their office, they were chief-builders. To the ungodly the Holy Ghost is wont to concede the honourable titles which belong to their office, until that God remove them from it. How abandoned, oftentimes, were the priests among the ancient people of God, and yet they retained the dignity and honour which belonged to their office, until they were denuded of it. Hence the words of Isaiah, (xlii. 19,) "Who is blind, but my servant; and who is foolish, but he whom I have sent?" Now, though their intention was to undermine the whole constitution of the Church, yet, as they were divinely called for a different object, he calls them the servants and the sent of God. In our day, also, the Pope and his filthy clergy, who usurp the title of the priesthood, nevertheless continue the professed enemies of Christ; from which it follows, that they are any thing rather than God's legitimate servants, and occupying the position of pastors: while they scatter the flock, their condemnation will be the greater. Between them and the Levitical priests there is assuredly a

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wide difference. As, however, they are invested with the usual authority, there can be no harm in conceding the title to them, provided they do not use it as a cloak to conceal their vile tyranny; for if the mere title was sufficient to procure for them personal reverence, then Christ must, of necessity, have been silenced, seeing that the priests rejected his doctrine. This passage rather informs us, that those who are intrusted with the office of ruling the Church, sometimes prove the worst workmen. David, speaking by the Spirit, denominates chief-builders those who attempted to destroy the Son of God and the salvation of mankind, and by whom the worship of God was adulterated, religion wholly corrupted, and the temple of God profaned. If, therefore, all who are clothed with the ordinary authority must be listened to, without exception, as legally appointed pastors, then must Christ not speak, because it very frequently occurs, that his bitterest enemies are concealed under the garb of pastors.

Here we behold with how strong and impregnable a shield the Holy Ghost furnishes us against the empty vauntings of the Papal clergy. Be it so, that they possess the name, "chief-builders;" but if they disown Christ, does it necessarily follow that we must disown him also? Let us rather contemn and trample under our feet all their decrees, and let us reverence this precious stone upon which our salvation rests. By the expression, *is become the head of the corner*, we are to understand the real foundation of the Church, which sustains the whole weight of the edifice; it being requisite that the corners should form the main strength of buildings. I do not approve of the ingenious opinion of Augustine, who makes Christ the corner-stone, because he united both Jews and Gentiles, thus making the corner the middle stone between the two different walls.

David then proceeds to repeat, at some length, as I have observed, that it is erroneous to estimate the kingdom of Christ by the sentiments and opinions of men, because, in spite of the opposition of the world, it is erected in an astonishing manner by the invisible power of God. In the meantime, we ought to remember, that all that was accomplished

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in the person of Christ extends to the gradual development of his kingdom, even until the end of the world. When Christ dwelt on the earth, he was despised by the chief priests; and now, those who call themselves the successors of Peter and Paul, but who are truly Ananiases and Caiaphases, giant-like wage war against the Gospel and the Holy Ghost. Not that this furious rebellion ought to give us any uneasiness: let us rather humbly adore that wonderful power of God which reverses the perverse decisions of the world. If our limited understandings could comprehend the course which God follows for the protection and preservation of his Church, there would be no mention made of a miracle. From this we conclude, that his mode of working is incomprehensible, baffling the understandings of men.

Was it necessary, it may be asked, that Christ should be reproached by the master-builders? It would certainly indicate a sad state of the Church, if she never had any pastors except those who were deadly enemies to her welfare. When Paul styles himself "a master-builder," he informs us that this office was common to all the apostles, (1 Cor. iii. 10.) My answer therefore is, that all who bear rule in the Church are not charged with perpetual blindness; but that the Holy Spirit meets with this stumblingblock, which, in other respects, is wont to prove a hinderance to many when they witness the name of Christ enveloped with worldly splendour. When God, for the purpose of making his glory shine forth more brightly, looseth Satan's rein, so that those who are invested with power and authority reject Christ, then it is that the Holy Spirit bids us be of good courage, and setting at nought all these perverse decisions, receive with all respect the King whom God has placed over us. From the first, we know that the master-builders have endeavoured to subvert the kingdom of Christ. The same thing is taking place in our times, in those who are intrusted with the superintendence of the Church having made every attempt to overturn that kingdom, by directing against it all the machinery which they can devise. But if we call to mind this prophecy, our faith will not fail, but will be more and more confirmed; because, from these things it will the better appear that the

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kingdom of Christ does not depend upon the favour of men, and that it does not derive its strength from earthly supports, even as he has not attained it by the suffrages of men. If, however, the master-builders build well, the perverseness of those who will not permit themselves to be appropriated to the sacred edifice will be so much the less excusable. Moreover, as often as we shall, by this species of temptation, be put to the trial, let us not forget that it is unreasonable to expect that the Church must be governed according to our understanding of matters, but that we are ignorant of the government of it, inasmuch as that which is miraculous surpasses our comprehension.

The next clause, *this is the day that God hath made*, reminds us that there will be nothing but the reign of moral darkness, until Christ the Sun of Righteousness illumine us by his gospel. We are also reminded that this work is to be ascribed to God, and that mankind must not arrogate to themselves any merit on account of their own endeavours. The call to the exercise of gratitude, which immediately follows, is intended to warn us against yielding to the madness of our enemies, however furiously they rage against us, in order to deprive us of the joy which Christ has brought to us. From him all our happiness is derived, and, consequently, there is no cause for surprise that all the ungodly fume with vexation, and feel indignant, that we should be elevated to such a pitch of joy as to suppress all the sorrows and soothe all the asperity of the trials we have to endure. Prior to the advent of Christ, the prayer that follows was familiar to the people, and even to the children, for the Evangelists declare that Christ was received with this form of salutation. And certainly it was the will of God to ratify, at that time, the prediction which he had spoken by the mouth of David; or rather that exclamation clearly demonstrates that the interpretation, against which the Jews now raise a clamour, was unanimously admitted; and this renders their obstinacy and malice the more inexcusable. I blame them not for their stupidity, seeing that they purposely spread around them the mists of ignorance to blind themselves and others. And as the Jews never ceased to put up this prayer during that sad desolation, and

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those hideous devastations, their perseverance ought to inspire us with new vigour in these days. At that time they had not the honour of a kingdom, no royal throne, no name but with God; and yet amid this deplorable and ruinous state of things, they adhered to the form of prayer formerly prescribed to them by the Holy Spirit. Instructed by their example, let us not fail to pray ardently for the restoration of the Church, which, in our day, is involved in sad desolation. Besides, in these words, we are also informed that Christ's kingdom is not upheld and advanced by the policy of men, but that this is the work of God alone, for in his blessing solely the faithful are taught to confide. Moreover, the very repetition of the words which, as we have observed, renders them more forcible, ought to arouse us from our lethargy, and render us more intensely ardent in breathing forth this prayer. God can, indeed, of himself, and independently of the prayer of any one, erect and protect the kingdom of his Son; but it is not without good cause that he has laid this obligation on us, as there is no duty more becoming the faithful than that of earnestly seeking for the advancement of his glory.

27. *Jehovah is God, and has given light to us: bind ye the lamb with cords, even to the horns of the altar.*[1]

28. *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: my God, I will exalt thee.*

29. *Praise ye Jehovah; because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.*

27. *Jehovah is God.* Here the prophet establishes what he said formerly, that God, out of compassion to his Church, dissipated the darkness, and introduced the light of his grace, when David mounted the throne, for that was the harbinger

[1] "*Yea even unto the horns of the altar*—before these words must be understood *lead it:* for the victims were bound to rings fixed in the floor. *The horns* were architectural ornaments, a kind of capitals, made of iron or of brass, somewhat in the form of the carved horns of an animal, projecting from the four angles of the altar. The officiating priest, when he prayed, placed his hands on them, and sometimes sprinkled them with the blood of the sacrifice: comp. Exod. xxx. 3; Lev. iv. 7, 18. At the end of this verse, the word *saying* must be supplied."—*Cresswell.*

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of the redemption which was anticipated to be effected in due time by Christ. He also asserts that God was the author of that deliverance, so wonderful and unlooked for, and he declares that, by the result, he plainly showed himself to be truly God. These words, *Jehovah himself is a strong God, because he has restored the light of life to us*, are tacitly emphatical. For as the faithful, in consequence of the confused state of the Church, were reduced almost to the brink of despair; the ungodly imagined that all this had happened regarding the children of Abraham, by reason of God himself having, as it were, forsaken them. Wherefore he returns to offer up anew his thankful acknowledgments for the divine grace. He commands the faithful to *bind the victim to the horns of the altar*, because, according to the legal institute, they could not render solemn thanks unto God without sacrifices. As David was a strict observer of the Law, he would not omit the ceremonial observances which God had enjoined. He would, however, always keep his attention steadily fixed on their grand design, and would have recourse to them only as helps to assist him in presenting a spiritual service unto God. Now that the shadowy dispensation has passed away, it remains that we offer unto God our thanksgivings through Christ, who sanctifies them by his own immaculate offering, lest we should be debarred from this exercise of godliness, by the corruptions of our flesh. And that David turned his attention to the praises of God, is abundantly manifest from the following verse, in which he promises that he *would celebrate the name of God*, because he was his God, and he knew it; that is, he felt from experience that from his hand he might calculate on receiving sure and immediate assistance.

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PSALM CXIX.

As this psalm treats of various matters, it is difficult to give an epitome of its contents. There are, however, two things which the prophet mainly aims at; the exhorting of the children of God to follow godliness and a holy life; and the prescribing of the rule, and pointing out the form of the true worship of God, so that the faithful may devote themselves wholly to the study of the Law. Along with these he frequently blends promises for the purpose of animating the worshippers of God to live more justly and piously; and, at the same time, he introduces complaints respecting the impious contempt of the Law, lest they should become tainted by bad examples. In short, he frequently passes from one topic to another, and prosecutes no one particular subject continuously;[1] and therefore it will be best to discuss each subject in its proper place.

[1] It is, however, a mistake to suppose, that no connection of thought is observed throughout this lengthened composition, as has sometimes been asserted even by writers of note. "It has been too commonly assumed," says Jebb, "that the 119th psalm is a collection of unconnected thoughts. To this opinion, even that most profound religious philosopher, Dr Barrow, inclines, (Sermon 48, on Ps. cxix. 60;) and his eloquent words must, in this instance, be received with no small caution. 'This psalm,' he says, 'no less excellent in virtue than large in bulk, containeth manifold reflections on the nature, the properties, the adjuncts, and effects of God's law; many sprightly ejaculations about it, conceived in different forms of speech; some in way of petition, some of thanksgiving, some of resolution, some of assertion or aphorism; many useful directions, many zealous exhortations to the observance of it; the which are not ranged in any strict order, but, like a variety of wholesome herbs in a fair field, do, with a grateful confusion, lie dispersed, as they freely did spring in the heart, or were suggested by the devout spirit of him who indited this psalm, where no coherence of sentences being designed, we may consider any one of them absolutely or singly by itself.' The fine imagination of this eminent writer justly recognises the beautiful variety, the variegations of thought, the πολυποίκιλος σοφία exhibited in this psalm; but too much seems to be conceded to the prevalent opinion of a want of connection. I willingly allow, that the sentiments are not limited and enthralled by any exact or Procrustean rule; that there are no measures of intellectual geometry adhered to, reducing this divine poem to a rigid didactic system: that the mind of the prophet is free, and flowing, and discursive. Still this very flow of thought implies connection and association, and forbids the frigid idea that the psalm is a mere canto of reflections, like Lord Bacon's collection of aphorisms, or the maxims of Isocrates. I do not intend to maintain what could not be proved, that a consecutive order can be traced throughout; but instances can, undoubtedly, be drawn of passages which maintain a beautiful sequence and connection between their several members."—*Jebb's Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations*, vol. ii. pp. 274-276.

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א 1. *Blessed are they who are upright*[1] *in their way, walking in the law of Jehovah.*
א 2. *Blessed are they who, keeping his testimonies, seek him with all their heart.*
א 3. *Surely they do not work iniquity, who walk in his ways.*
א 4. *Thou hast commanded that thy statutes should be observed carefully.*[2]
א 5. *I wish that my ways may be directed to the observing of thy statutes!*
א 6. *Then I shall not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy precepts.*
א 7. *I will praise thee in the uprightness of my heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness.*
א 8. *I will observe thy statutes: do not forsake me very far.*[3]

Some call this the octonary psalm, because that, through every successive eight verses, the initial words of each line begin with the same letter in alphabetical order. That this was done to aid the memory, may be gathered from each part containing a doctrine, which ought to form a theme of constant meditation among the children of God. For the purpose, therefore, of rendering it less irksome to the reader, the prophet has distinguished every successive eight verses by their beginning each with the corresponding letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and thus all excuses, on the score of ignorance, are removed, even from the callous and slothful. This help does not extend to those who read it in other languages; but the principle must not be overlooked, that the doctrine exhibited in this psalm should be carefully studied by all the children of God, and treasured up in their hearts, to render them the more conversant with it. Touching the author, I assert nothing, because it cannot be ascertained, even by probable conjecture, who he was; and expositors are agreed that no satisfactory conclusion can be arrived at in the matter.

[1] "Vel, perfecti."—*Lat. marg.* "Or, perfect."
[2] מאד, *meod*, superlatively,—to the uttermost.
[3] Hammond reads, "O forsake me not to any great degree;" and adds, "The Hebrew עד־מאד, *ad meod*, here, and in verse 43, is literally *unto very much*. So the LXX. render it, ἕως σφόδρα, *i. e., to any high degree*, the Chaldee, 'unto all at once,' but the Syriac, *for ever*, both referring it to the *time*, whereas the Hebrew seems rather to the *degree*, from the noun that signifies *multitude, plenty, abundance*."

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As David surpassed all others in point of poetical and devotional talent, I will not scruple occasionally to insert his name.[1]

It may be proper to take notice of certain terms which frequently occur in the psalm. Of the term תורה, *torah*, I say nothing, which, having its derivation from a word which signifies to *instruct*, is yet uniformly taken for *law*. Some of the Rabbins affirm that חוקים, *chukim*, signifies statutes, or divinely appointed rites, the reason of which is very obvious. They say that פקדים, *phikudim*, denotes those precepts which relate to natural justice. It is certain that משפטים, *mishpatim*, signifies commandments, because this is proved by the etymology of the word. As to עדות, *edoth*, the Hebrews understand it of the doctrine of the law, but with the certain indication, pointing out to us that it is comprehensive of the manner in which God enters into covenant with his people. The precepts of the law are denominated judgments

[1] Some consider this psalm, as well as all the other alphabetic psalms, to be much more modern compositions than the time of David, and refer it to the time of the captivity in Babylon. But many others, as Venema, Michaelis, &c., ascribe it to David, and suppose it to have been written before his elevation to the throne. Its contents, certainly, favour this latter opinion, seeming to accord so well with the long and harassing persecution to which he was subjected by the malice and revenge of Saul. If David was its author, it is the most artificial and operose in its composition of all his psalms, and he has exhibited in the treatment of his subject—which is the celebration of the perfection of God's law, and the happiness of those who obey it—an extraordinary fecundity of expression, as if one of his intentions had been to show in how many various shapes, and with what copiousness of words, he could enunciate and illustrate a few and the same topics. The aspirations for instruction, consolation, and protection, with which almost every portion of this psalm is mingled, have a soothing and delightful effect, whilst the language throughout is rendered impressive by its peculiar strength and concinnity. It may, however, be doubtful, whether it be just to elevate it, as has been done by some, above all the other psalms. Dr Adam Clarke justly remarks, "Like all other portions of divine revelation, it is elegant, important, and useful; and while I admire the fecundity of the Psalmist's genius, the unabating flow of his poetic vein, his numerous synonymes, and his *copia verborum*, by which he is enabled to expound, diversify, and illustrate the same idea: presenting it to his reader in all possible points of view, so as to render it pleasing, instructive, and impressive; I cannot rob the rest of the book of its just praise by setting this, as many have done, above all the pieces it contains. It is by far the longest, the most artificial, and most diversified; yet, in proportion to its length, it contains the fewest ideas of any in the book."

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and righteousness, to inform us that God enjoins nothing except what is right and just, and that mankind ought to seek for no other rule for the perfecting of holiness, but what consists in regulating their life by rendering obedience to the law. The meaning is almost synonymous when they are called *the ways of the Lord*, intimating that those who do not depart from the direction of the law, may safely conclude that they are in no danger of going astray. The ordinances of God, and the edicts of kings, have the term חוקים, *chukim*, applied to them indiscriminately, and פקודים, *phikudim*, refers to different kinds of justice, as is manifest from many parts of Scripture, which demonstrates that there is no foundation for the subtile distinction and difference formerly noticed. And in this psalm almost all these terms are synonymous, as the context will show.[1] To procure greater respect

[1] Others deny that these and other similar terms, which frequently occur in this psalm, are mere synonymes; and they have endeavoured to show from etymological investigation, that, although all of them designate the law, yet they present it under a different aspect. Jebb has attempted, at some length, to point out the specific differences between these words. The following is an abstract of his remarks:—"The next peculiarity to be observed in this psalm is, the regular recurrence of nine characteristic words, at least one or other of which is found in each distich, with one solitary exception, the second distich of the 12th division. These words are *law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, saying;* and a word which only twice occurs as a characteristic,—*way*.

"These are, doubtless, all designations of the Divine Law; but it were doing a deep injury to the cause of revealed truth to affirm that they are mere synonymes; in other words, that the sentiments of this compendium of heavenly wisdom are little better than a string of tautologies. The fact is, as some critics, both Jewish and Christian, have observed, that each of these terms designates the same law of God, but each under a different aspect, signifying the different modes of its promulgation, and of its reception. Each of these words will now be examined in order, and an attempt will be made to discriminate them.

"1. *Law.* This word is formed from a verb which means to direct, to guide, to aim, to shoot forwards. Its etymological meaning, then, would be a rule of conduct, a κανὼν σαφὴς. It means God's law in general, whether it be that universal rule called the law of nature, or that which was revealed to his Church by Moses, and perfected by Christ. In strictness, the law means a plain rule of conduct, rather placed clearly in man's sight, than enforced by any command; that is to say, this word does not necessarily include its sanctions.

"2. *Testimonies* are derived from a word which signifies to bear witness, to testify. The ark of the tabernacle is so called, as are the two tables of stone, and the tabernacle: the earnests and witnesses of God's inhabitation among his people. Testimonies are more particularly God's

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for the law, the prophet adorns it with a variety of titles, taking care constantly to enjoin upon us the same doctrine. I now proceed to the consideration of the contents of the psalm.

1. *Blessed are they who are upright.* In these words the prophet sets forth the same paradox which we met with at the commencement of the Book of Psalms. All men natur-

revealed law: the witnesses and confirmation of his promises made to his people, and earnests of his future salvation.

"3. *Precepts*, from a word which means *to place in trust*, mean something intrusted to man, 'that which is committed to thee:' appointments of God, which consequently have to do with the conscience, for which man is responsible, as an intelligent being.

"4. *Statutes.* The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or inscribe. The word means a definite prescribed written law. The term is applied to Joseph's law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the passover, &c. But in this psalm it has a more internal meaning;—that moral law of God, which is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will: not so obvious as the law and testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communication than his precepts: the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively, employed.

"5. *Commandments*, derived from a verb signifying to command or ordain. Such was God's command to Adam about the tree; to Noah about constructing the ark.

"6. *Judgments*, derived from a word signifying to govern, to judge or determine, mean judicial ordinances and decisions: legal sanctions.

"7. *Word.* There are two terms, quite distinct in the Hebrew, but both rendered *word*, in each of our authorised versions. The latter of these is rendered *saying* in the former volume of this work. They are closely connected; since out of twenty-two passages in which *word* occurs, in fourteen it is parallel to, or in connection with, *saying*. From this very circumstance it is evident they are not synonymous.

"The term here rendered *word* means the Λόγος, or Word of God, in its most divine sense; the announcement of God's revealed will; his command; his oracle; at times, the special communication to the prophets. The ten commandments are called by this term in Exodus: and דביר is the oracle in the temple. In this psalm it may be considered as,—1. God's revealed commandments in general. 2. As a revealed promise of certain blessings to the righteous. 3. As a thing committed to him as the minister of God. 4. As a rule of conduct; a channel of illumination.

"8. As to the remaining word *way*, that occurs but twice as a characteristic word, and the places in which it occurs must rather be considered as exceptions to the general rule: so that I am not disposed to consider it as intended to be a cognate expression with the above. At all events, its meaning is so direct and simple as to require no explanation: a plain rule of conduct; in its higher sense, the assisting grace of God through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life."—*Jebb's Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations*, vol. ii. pp. 279-293.

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ally aspire after happiness, but instead of searching for it in the right path, they designedly prefer wandering up and down through endless by-paths, to their ruin and destruction. The Holy Spirit deservedly condemns this apathy and blindness. And but for man's cupidity, which, with brutish impetuosity, hurries him in the opposite direction, the meaning of the words would appear quite plain to him. And the farther a man wanders from God, the happier does he imagine himself to be; and hence all treat, as a fable, what the Holy Spirit declares about true piety and the service of God. This is a doctrine which scarcely one among a hundred receives.

The term *way*, is here put for the manner, or course and way of life: and hence he calls those upright in their way, whose sincere and uniform desire it is to practise righteousness, and to devote their life to this purpose. In the next clause of the verse, he specifies more clearly, that a godly and righteous life consists *in walking in the law of God.* If a person follow his own humour and caprice, he is certain to go astray; and even should he enjoy the applause of the whole world, he will only weary himself with very vanity. But it may be asked, whether the prophet excludes from the hope of happiness all who do not worship God perfectly? Were this his meaning, it would follow, that none except angels alone would be happy, seeing that the perfect observance of the law is to be found in no part of the earth. The answer is easy: When uprightness is demanded of the children of God, they do not lose the gracious remission of their sins, in which their salvation alone consists. While, then, the servants of God are happy, they still need to take refuge in his mercy, because their uprightness is not complete. In this manner are they who faithfully observe the law of God said to be truly happy; and thus is fulfilled that which is declared in Ps. xxxii. 2, "Blessed are they to whom God imputeth not sins." In the second verse, the same doctrine is confirmed more fully, by pronouncing blessed, not such as are wise in their own conceit, or assume a sort of fantastical holiness, but those who dedicate themselves to the covenant of God, and yield obedience to the dictates of his law. Farther, by these words, he tells us that God is by no means

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satisfied with mere external service, for he demands the sincere and honest affection of the heart. And assuredly, if God be the sole judge and disposer of our life, the truth must occupy the principal place in our heart, because it is not sufficient to have our hands and feet only enlisted in his service.

3. *Surely they do not work iniquity.* The statement, that they who follow God as their guide do not work iniquity, may seem to be a mere common-place, and universally admitted truth. The prophet has two reasons for making it; first, to teach us that our life must be entirely under the direction of God; and, secondly, that we may more diligently and carefully attend to his doctrine. It is acknowledged by every one, that those who render obedience to God are in no danger of going astray, and yet every one is found turning aside to his own ways. Does not such licentiousness or presumption palpably demonstrate that they have a greater regard for their own devices than for the unerring law of God? And after all, as often as a man happens to fall, is not the plea of inadvertence instantly alleged, as if none ever sinned knowingly and voluntarily; or as if the law of God, which is an antidote to all delinquencies, because it keeps all our vicious propensities in check, did not furnish us with sufficient wisdom to put us upon our guard? The prophet, therefore, very justly declares, that those who are instructed in the law of God, cannot set up the plea of ignorance when they fall into sin, seeing they are wilfully blind. Were they to attend carefully to God's voice, they would be well fortified against all the snares of Satan. To strike them with terror, he informs them in the fourth verse, that God demands a rigid observance of the law; from which it may be gathered, that he will not suffer the contemners of it to escape with impunity. Besides, by speaking to God in the second person, he places him before our eyes as a Judge.

5. *I wish that my ways may be directed.* The original word כּוֹן, *kun*, is sometimes rendered to *establish*, and, accordingly, it may seem as if the prophet were soliciting for himself the

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virtue of perseverance. I am rather inclined to understand it as signifying to *direct;* for, although God's plainly instructing us in his law, the obtuseness of our understanding, and the perversity of our hearts, constantly need the direction of his Spirit. Our main desire, therefore, ought to be for an understanding wisely regulated by the law of God, and also for a docile and obedient heart. Next, he adds, if a man carefully observe the law of God, he need be under no apprehension that he will ever regret what he has done or undertaken to do. The word *respect* intimates, that we must not be influenced by our own designs, nor decide, according to carnal reason, what we are to do, but must at once come to the determination, that they who turn not aside, either to the right hand or the left, from the observance of God's commandments, are indeed in the right path. They who reverently respect his law, may not escape the censure of the great bulk of mankind, yet the prophet declares, that *they shall not be ashamed,* because they have a good conscience in the presence of God and the angels, and, with the approval of this celestial assembly, they are well satisfied and contented; for if they depended upon the opinion of the world, their courage would presently fail. He says, *all thy precepts,* intimating, that among the snares of Satan, amid such thick darkness and so great insensibility as ours, the utmost vigilance and caution are necessary, if we would aim at being entirely exempted from blame. Wherefore, in all that we do, we must endeavour to have the law before us, to keep us from falling.

7. *I will praise thee.* He affirms it to be a singular instance of the loving-kindness of God, if a person has made considerable proficiency in his law. As a token and testimony of this, he here puts the giving of thanks to God; as if he should say, Lord, thou wilt confer upon me an inestimable blessing, if thou instruct me in thy law. It follows, therefore, that nothing in this life is more to be desired than this; and my fervent prayer is, that we may be fairly and fully convinced of the truth of it. For while searching carefully after such things as we deem advantageous to us, we do not overlook

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any earthly convenience, and yet we neglect that which is of most importance. The phrase, the *judgments of thy righteousness,* is the same with the commandments, in which perfect righteousness is comprehended; and thus the prophet commends God's law on account of the thorough perfection of the doctrine contained in it. From this verse we learn, that none will praise God unfeignedly and cordially but he who has made such proficiency in his school as to mould his life into subjection to him. It is vain to make a pretence of praising God with the mouth and the tongue if we dishonour him by our life. Hence the prophet very justly here makes the fruit of genuine piety to consist in celebrating the praises of God without hypocrisy.

8. *I will observe thy statutes.* In these words he avers it to be his intention to observe the law of God, but, conscious of his own weakness, he utters a prayer that God would not deprive him of his grace. The term *forsake* is susceptible of two interpretations, either that God withdraws his Spirit, or that he permits his people to be brought low by adversity, as if he had forsaken them. The latter interpretation agrees best with the context, and is most in accordance with the phrase immediately subjoined, *very far.* The prophet is not altogether averse to the trial of his faith, only he is apprehensive lest it might fail were the trial to be too long protracted, and therefore he desires to be treated with tenderness in his infirmity. "O God! thou seest my frame of mind, and, as I am but a man, do not conceal too long from me the tokens of thy favour, or defer helping me longer than is proper for me, lest, imagining myself to be forsaken of thee, I turn aside from the direct pursuit of godliness."

ב 9. *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to thy word.*

ב 10. *I have sought thee with my whole heart; do not permit me to wander from thy commandments.*

ב 11. *I have hid thy word in my heart,*[1] *that I might not sin against thee.*

[1] *I have hid thy word in my heart, i.e.,* I have laid it up there, as men deposit their most precious possessions in a secure place known only to

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ב 12. *Blessed art thou, O Jehovah! teach me thy statutes.*
ב 13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*
ב 14. *I have taken pleasure in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*
ב 15. *I will meditate upon thy precepts, and will take heed to thy paths.*
ב 16. *I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy words.*

9. *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?* In this place he repeats, in different words, the same truth which he formerly advanced, That, however much men may pique themselves upon their own works, there is nothing pure in their life until they have made a complete surrender of themselves to the word of the Lord. The more effectually to excite them to this, he produces, in an especial manner, the example of children or youths. In mentioning these, he by no means gives an unbridled license to those who have arrived at mature years, or who are aged, as if they were competent to regulate their own life, and as if their own prudence served as a law to them; but because youth puts men where two ways meet, and renders it imperative for them to select the course of life which they mean to follow, he declares that, when a person sets about the regulation of his life, no advice will prove of any advantage, unless he adopts the law of God as his rule and guide. In this way the prophet stimulates men to an early and seasonable regulation of their manners, and not to delay doing so any longer, agreeably to the words of Solomon, "Remember thy Creator in thy youth, ere the days of trouble come, and the years which shall be grief unto thee," Eccles. xii. 1.[1] They who defer from time to time become hardened in their vicious practices, and arrive at mature years, when it is too late to attempt a reformation. There is another reason, arising from the fact, of the carnal propensities being very powerful in youth, requiring a double restraint; and the more they are inclined to excess, the greater is the necessity for curbing their licentiousness. The prophet, therefore, not without reason, exhorts them particularly to

themselves. Comp. Prov. xi. 1; and see 2 Kings xx. 13, &c., for an instance of the contrary practice.

[1] "Et les ans qui se seront en fascherie."—*Fr.*

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attend to the observance of the law. We may reason from the greater to the less; for if the law of God possesses the power of restraining the impetuosity of youth, so as to preserve pure and upright all who take it for their guide, then, assuredly, when they come to maturity, and their irregular desires are considerably abated, it will prove the best antidote for correcting their vices. The reason, therefore, of so much evil prevailing in the world, arises from men wallowing in their own impurity, and being disposed to yield more to their own inclination than to heavenly instruction. The only sure protection is, to regulate ourselves according to God's word. Some, wise in their own conceit, throw themselves into the snares of Satan, others, from listlessness and languor, live a vile and wicked life.

10. *With my whole heart.* Conscious of the integrity of his heart, the prophet still implores the help of God, that he might not stumble by reason of his infirmity. He makes no boast of self-preparation, as if he had spontaneously begun to inquire after God, but in praising the grace which he had experienced, he at the same time aspires after stedfastness to persevere in walking in his ways. It is folly on the part of the Papists to seize upon this and similar passages, as if the saints, of their own free will, anticipated the grace of the Holy Spirit, and afterwards were favoured with his aid. The prophet does not make a division between God and himself, but rather prays God to continue his work till it is completed, agreeably with what we are generally taught, to keep God mindful of his benefits until he accomplish them.

In the meantime, there is good cause for presenting our supplication to God, to stretch out his hand towards us when he sees our minds so settled, that we are solicitous of nothing so much as acting uprightly. And as he elevates us with confidence to ask the gift of perseverance, when he inspires our hearts with proper affection towards him, so also does he entreat us for the future not to sink into a careless and languid state like soldiers who have been discharged, but seek to be constantly directed by the spirit of wisdom, and to be sustained by the principles of fortitude and virtue. David

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here, from his own example, points out to us a rule, that by how much a man finds himself succoured by God, by so much ought he to be induced the more carefully and earnestly to implore the continuance of his aid; for unless he restrain us, we will instantly wander and go astray. This sentiment is more explicitly stated in the original word תשגני, *tashgeni*, which is in the passive voice, and signifies, *to be led astray*.[1] From the import of the term, I do not mean to establish the doctrine that God secretly incites us to commit sin, but only to let my readers know, that such is our liability to err, that we immediately relapse into sin the instant he leaves us to ourselves. This passage also admonishes us that the man who swerves but a little from God's commandments is guilty of going astray.

11. *I have hid thy word in my heart.* This psalm not being composed for the personal and peculiar use of the author only, we may therefore understand, that as frequently as David sets before us his own example, under this model he points out the course we ought to pursue. Here we are informed that we are well fortified against the stratagems of Satan when God's law is deeply seated in our hearts. For unless it have a fast and firm hold there, we will readily fall into sin. Among scholars, those whose knowledge is confined to books, if they have not the book always before them, readily discover their ignorance; in like manner, if we do not imbibe the doctrine of God, and are well acquainted with it, Satan will easily surprise and entangle us in his meshes. Our true safeguard, then, lies not in a slender knowledge of his law, or in a careless perusal of it, but in hiding it deeply in our hearts. Here we are reminded, that however men may be convinced of their own wisdom, they are yet destitute of all right judgment, except as far as they have God as their teacher.

12. *Blessed art thou, O Jehovah!* Such had been the pro-

[1] "The Hebrew תשגני is here in the conjugation Hiphil, from שגה, *to be ignorant* or *err*. Now of that conjugation the Hebrews observe, that as it signifies sometimes no more than *to permit*, so it sometimes notes *to cause*, sometimes *to occasion*, that which the verb imports."—*Hammond.*

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phet's proficiency, that he was not only one of God's disciples, but also a public teacher of the Church. Nevertheless, acknowledging himself and all the upright to be only on their journey till they arrive at the close of life, he fails not to ask for the spirit of understanding. This passage informs us generally, that if God do not enlighten us with the spirit of discernment, we are not competent to behold the light which shines forth from his law, though it be constantly before us. And thus it happens, that not a few are blind even when surrounded with the clear revelation of this doctrine, because, confident in their own perspicacity, they contemn the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. Farther, let us learn from this passage, that none are possessed of such superiority of intellect as not to admit of constant increase. If the prophet, upon whom God had conferred so honourable an office as a teacher of the Church, confesses himself to be only a disciple or scholar, what madness is it for those who are greatly behind him in point of attainments not to strain every nerve to rise to higher excellence? Nor does he depend upon his own merits for obtaining his requests; he beseeches God to grant them from a regard to his own glory. This appears from the phraseology by which he introduces his request, *Blessed art thou, O Jehovah!* intimating, that his confidence of success originated in God's being fully entitled to all praise on account of his unbounded goodness, justice, and mercy.

13. *With my lips.* In this verse he declares that the law of God was not only deeply engraven on his own heart, but that it was his earnest and strenuous endeavour to gain over many of his fellow-disciples into subjection to God. It is indeed a heartless matter to speak of the law of God abstractly, as we see hypocrites do, who talk very fluently about the whole doctrine of godliness, to which they are entire strangers. What the prophet noticed above, respecting the affection of the heart for God's law, he now likewise applies to the lips. And, immediately afterwards, he again establishes the truth of what he had asserted about his cordial and unfeigned endeavours to instruct others; by saying, that he derived no less pleasure from the doctrine of God than from all the riches of

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the world. He indirectly contrasts his holy love for the law, with which he was inflamed, with the unholy avarice which has taken possession of almost all the world. "As wealth attracts to itself the hearts of mankind, so I have taken more exquisite delight in the progress which I make in the doctrine of godliness, than if I abounded in all manner of riches."

15. *In thy precepts.* That to which I formerly adverted must not be forgotten—the prophet's not making a boast of his own acquirements, but setting before others an example for their imitation. We are aware that the majority of mankind are so much involved in the cares of the world, as to leave no time or leisure for meditating upon the doctrine of God. To meet this callous indifference, he very seasonably commends diligence and attention. And even were we not so ensnared by the world, we know how readily we lose sight of the law of God, in the daily temptations which suddenly overtake us. It is not therefore without reason that the prophet exhorts us to constant exercise, and enjoins us to direct all our energies to the subject of meditation on God's precepts. And as the life of men is unstable, being continually distracted by the carnality of their minds, he declares that he will consider attentively the *ways of God.* Subsequently, he repeats the exquisite pleasure he took in this pursuit. For our proficiency in the law of God will be small, until we cheerfully and heartily set our minds upon it. And, in fact, the commencement of a good life consists in God's law attracting us to him by its sweetness. By the same means the lusts of the flesh, too, are subdued or mitigated. In our natural state, what is more agreeable to us than that which is sinful? This will be the constant tendency of our minds, unless the delight which we feel in the law carry us in the opposite direction.

ג 17. *Do good to thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.*

ג 18. *Open my eyes, and I shall see the marvellous things of thy law.*

ג 19. *I am a stranger on the earth: do not conceal from me thy commandments.*

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ג 20. *My soul is rent with the desire it hath at all times unto thy judgments.*
ג 21. *Thou hast destroyed the proud, they are accursed that wander from thy commandments.*
ג 22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*
ג 23. *Princes also did sit, they spoke against me: thy servant meditated on thy statutes.*
ג 24. *Also thy testimonies are my delights, the men of my counsel.*

17. *Do good to thy servant.* The term גמל, *gamal*, which some render *to requite*, does not, among the Hebrews, import mutual recompense, but frequently signifies *to confer a benefit*, as in Psalm cxvi. 7, and many other passages. Here it must be viewed as expressive of free favour. The words, however, may admit of two senses. They may be read as a separate clause, in this manner: O God! display thy goodness to thy servant, and thus I shall live, or then I shall esteem myself happy. Or the verse may form one connected statement: O God! grant to thy servant the favour that, while I live, I may keep thy commandments. If the former lection is adopted, then, by these words, the prophet declares that, without the favour of God, he is like a dead man; that though he might abound in every thing else, yet he could not subsist without feeling that God was propitious towards him. The latter interpretation is preferable, That the prophet asks as a principal favour, that, while he lives, he may devote himself entirely to God; being fully persuaded that the grand object of his existence consists in his exercising himself in his service, an object which he firmly resolves to pursue. For this reason these two clauses are connected together, *that I may live, and keep thy word.* "I desire no other mode of living than that of approving myself to be a true and faithful servant of God." All wish God to grant them a prolongation of their life; a wish after which the whole world ardently aspire, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who reflects upon the purpose for which he ought to live. To withdraw us from cherishing such irrational propensities, the prophet here describes the main object of our existence. He declares it to be owing to the peculiar grace of the Holy Spirit, that

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any person keeps the law of God. Had he imagined that the preparing of himself for the observance of his law depended on his own free will, then this prayer would have been nothing else than downright hypocrisy.

Very similar is the doctrine contained in the next verse. Having acknowledged, that power to keep the law is imparted to men by God, he, at the same time, adds, that every man is blind, until he also enlighten the eyes of his understanding. Admitting that God gives light to us by his word, the prophet here means that we are blind amid the clearest light, until he remove the veil from our eyes. When he confesses that his eyes are veiled and shut, rendering him unable to discern the light of the heavenly doctrine, until God, by the invisible grace of his Spirit, open them, he speaks as if he were deploring his own blindness, and that of the whole human race. But, while God claims this power for himself, he tells us that the remedy is at hand, provided we do not, by trusting to our own wisdom, reject the gracious illumination offered to us. Let us learn, too, that we do not receive the illumination of the Spirit of God to make us contemn the external word, and take pleasure only in secret inspirations, like many fanatics, who do not regard themselves spiritual, except they reject the word of God, and substitute in its place their own wild speculations. Very different is the prophet's aim, which is to inform us that our illumination is to enable us to discern the light of life, that God manifests by his word. He designates the doctrine of the law, *marvellous things*,[1] to humble us, to contemplate with admiration its height; and to convince us the more of our need of the grace of God, to comprehend the mysteries, which surpass our limited capacity. From which we infer, that not only the ten commandments are included in the term law, but also the covenant of eternal salvation, with all its provisions, which God has made. And knowing, as we do, that Christ, "in

[1] *Marvellous things* "means things which are difficult and wonderful. The reference here is to the figures and adumbrations of the law, which so veiled and concealed the substances to which they related, that the mass of readers quite lost sight of them. The Psalmist therefore prays for Divine illumination, to enable him to solve, at least in some degree, the enigmas in which future things were enveloped."—*Walford.*

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whom are hid all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom," "is the end of the law," we need not be surprised at the prophet commending it, in consequence of the sublime mysteries which it contains, Col. ii. 3; Rom. x. 4.

19. *I am a stranger on the earth.* It is proper to inquire into the reason for his calling himself a sojourner and stranger in the world. The great concern of the unholy and worldly is to spend their life here easily and quietly; but those who know that they have their journey to pursue, and have their inheritance reserved for them in heaven, are not engrossed nor entangled with these perishable things, but aspire after that place to which they are invited. The meaning may be thus summed up: "Lord, since I must pass quickly through the earth, what will become of me if I am deprived of the doctrine of thy law?" We learn from these words from what point we must commence our journey, if we would go on our way cheerfully unto God.

Besides, God is said *to conceal his commandments* from those whose eyes he does not open, because, not being endued with spiritual vision, in seeing they see not, so that what is before their eyes is hid from them. And, to demonstrate that he does not present his request in a careless manner, the prophet adds, that his affection for the law is most intense; for it is no common ardour which is expressed by him in the following language, *My soul is rent with the desire it hath at all times unto thy judgments.* As the man who may concentrate all his thoughts on one point with such intensity as almost to deprive him of the power of perception, may be said to be the victim of his intemperate zeal, so the prophet declares the energy of his mind to be paralysed and exhausted by his ardent love for the law.[1] The clause, *at all times,* is meant to express his perseverance; for it may occasionally

[1] "Every intense exertion of mind has an influence, if it be long continued, to exhaust and impair the faculties in some degree. Such an effect is here alluded to; the close and assiduous attention which the Psalmist had paid, and the exertion of strong desire which he had exercised, produced the feeling which he here speaks of. He is also to be regarded as using the language of poetry, which admits of stronger colouring than prosaic description."—*Walford.*

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happen that a man may apply himself with great ardour to the study of the heavenly doctrine; but it is only temporary: his zeal soon vanishes away. Stedfastness is therefore necessary, lest, through weariness, we become faint in our minds.

21. *Thou hast destroyed the proud.* Others render it, *Thou hast rebuked the proud;* a translation of which the Hebrew term גָּעַר, *gaar*, admits when the letter ב, *beth*, is joined with it in construction; but this being awanting, it is better to render it *destroy*.[1] It makes, however, little difference to the main drift of the passage, there being no doubt that the intention of the prophet is, to inform us that God's judgments instructed him to apply his mind to the study of the law; and certainly this is an exercise which we ought on no account to defer till God visit us with chastisement. But when we behold him taking vengeance upon the wicked, and the despisers of his word, we must be stupid, indeed, if his rod do not teach us wisdom; and, doubtless, it is an instance of special kindness on God's part, to spare us, and only to terrify us from afar, that he may bring us to himself without injuring or chastising us at all.

It is not without reason that he denominates all unbelievers *proud*, because it is true faith alone which humbles us, and all rebellion is the offspring of pride. From this we learn how profitable it is to consider carefully and attentively the judgments of God, by which he overthrows such haughtiness. When the weak in faith see the wicked rise in furious opposition against God, arrogantly casting off all restraint, and holding all religion in derision with impunity, they begin to question whether there be a God who sits as judge in heaven. God may, for a time, wink at this: by-and-bye, we witness him setting forth some indication of his judgment, to convince us that he hath not in vain uttered threatenings against the violators of his law; and we ought to bear in mind that all who depart from him are reprobate.

Let it be carefully observed that, *by wandering from his*

[1] "Maintenant veu qu'elle n'y est point adjoustee, le mot de Destruire y conviendra mieux."—*Fr.*

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commandments, is not meant all kinds of transgression indiscriminately, but that unbridled licentiousness which proceeds from impious contempt of God. It is, indeed, given as a general sentence, that "every one is cursed who continueth not in all things which are written," (Deut. xxvii. 26.) But as God, in his paternal kindness, bears with those who fail through infirmity of the flesh, so here we must understand these judgments to be expressly executed upon the wicked and reprobate; and their end, as Isaiah declares, is, "that the inhabitants of the earth may learn righteousness," (xxvi. 9.)

22. *Remove from me reproach.* This verse may admit of two senses: Let the children of God walk as circumspectly as it is possible for them to do, they will not escape being liable to many slanders, and therefore they have good reason to petition God to protect the unfeigned godliness which they practise against poisonous tongues. The following meaning may not inappropriately be given to the passage: O Lord, since I am conscious to myself, and thou art a witness of my unfeigned integrity, do not permit the unrighteous to sully my reputation, by laying unfounded accusations to my charge. But the meaning will be more complete, if we read it as forming one continued sentence: O God, permit not the ungodly to mock me for endeavouring to keep thy law. For this impiety has been rampant in the world even from the beginning, that the sincerity of God's worshippers has been matter of reproach and derision; even as, at this day, the same reproaches are still cast upon God's children, as if not satisfied with the common mode of living, they aspired being wiser than others. That which was spoken by Isaiah must now be accomplished, "Behold I and my children, whom thou hast given me to be for a sign;" so that God's children, with Christ their head, are, among the profane, as persons to be wondered at. Accordingly, Peter testifies that they charge us with madness for not following their ways, (1 Pet. iv. 4;) and as this reproach—the becoming the subjects of ridicule on account of their unfeigned affection for God's law—tends to the dishonour of his name, the prophet very justly demands the suppression of all these taunts; and

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Isaiah also, by his own example, directs us to flee to this refuge, because, although the wicked may arrogantly pour out their blasphemies on the earth, yet God sitteth in heaven as our judge.

In the following verse, he states more plainly that it was not in vain he besought God to vindicate him from such calumnies; for he was held in derision, not only by the common people, and by the most abandoned of mankind, but also by the chief men, who sat as judges. The term, *to sit*, imports that they had spoken injuriously and unjustly of him, not merely in their houses and at their tables, but publicly and on the very judgment-seat, where it behoved them to execute justice, and render to every one his due. The particle גַּם, *gam*, which he employs, and which signifies *also* or *even*, contains an implied contrast between the secret whisperings of the common people, and the imperious decisions of these imperious men, enhancing still more the baseness of their conduct. Nevertheless, in the midst of all this he stedfastly persevered in following after godliness. Satan was assailing him with this device in order to drive him to despair, but he tells us that he sought a remedy from it in meditation on the law of God. We are here taught, that it is not unusual for earthly judges to oppress God's servants, and make a mock of their piety. If David could not escape this reproach, why should we, in these times, expect to do so? Let us further learn, that there is nothing more perverse than to place dependence upon the judgments of men, because, in doing so, we must, of necessity, constantly be in a state of vacillation. Let us therefore rest satisfied with the approbation of God, though men causelessly defame us—not only men of low degree, but also the very judges themselves, from whom the utmost impartiality might be expected.

24. *Also thy testimonies are my delight.* The particle גַּם, *gam*, connects this with the preceding verse. To adhere unflinchingly to our purpose, when the world takes up an unjust opinion of us, and, at the same time, constantly to meditate on God's law, is an example of Christian fortitude seldom to be met with. The prophet now informs us how

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he overcame this temptation. *Thy testimonies*, says he, *are my delight*: "Although the cruel injustice of men, in charging me falsely, grieves and annoys me, yet the pleasurable delight which I take in thy law is a sufficient recompense for it all." He adds, that God's testimonies *are his counsellors*, by which we are to understand he did not rely on his own judgment simply, but took counsel from the word of God. This point ought to be carefully considered, inasmuch as we see how blind affection predominates in directing the lives of men. Whence does the avaricious man ask counsel, but from the erroneous principle which he has assumed, that riches are superior to every thing? Why does the ambitious man aspire after nothing so much as power, but because he regards nothing equal to the holding of honourable rank in the world? It is not surprising, therefore, that men are so grievously misled, seeing they give themselves up to the direction of such evil counsellors. Guided by the word of God, and prudently yielding obedience to its dictates, there will then be no inlet to the deceits of our flesh, and to the delusions of the world, and we will stand invincible against all the assaults of temptation.

ד 25. *My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken me according to thy word.*

ד 26. *I have declared my ways, and thou didst answer me: teach me thy statutes.*

ד 27. *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: and I will meditate on thy wonderful works.*

ד 28. *My soul*[1] *droppeth away for grief:*[2] *raise me up according to thy word.*

[1] *My soul* may here be considered equivalent to *I myself*. In Jer. li. 14, *by my soul* is rendered, in our English translation, *by myself*.

[2] "Mon ame s'escoule goutte a goutte."—*Fr.* "Floweth drop by drop." Walford, who translates "is bowed down," considers Calvin's translation objectionable, as it does not correspond with the prayer in the succeeding sentence, *Raise me up according to thy word*. "The Vulgar translation of this clause," says he, "'my soul melteth,' or, as other interpreters think, 'my soul is dissolved into tears,' appears to be inadmissible, chiefly on account of the next clause. Dathe, following Driessenius, Knapp, and Seiler, explains it, as is here done, by 'is bowed down,' a sense which the word דלף has in the Arabic use of it, and which certainly agrees with the connection much better than that of weeping or dissolving."

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ד 29. *Take away from me the way of falsehood: and grant to me the favour of thy law.*

ד 30. *I have chosen the way of truth: and I have set thy judgments before me.*

ד 31. *I have cleaved to thy testimonies: O Jehovah! let me not be ashamed.*

ד 32. *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart.*

25. *My soul cleaveth to the dust.*[1] He means that he had no more hope of life than if he had been shut up in the tomb; and this must be carefully attended to, that we may not become impatient and grieved, whenever it may please God to make us endure various kinds of death. And, by his own example, he instructs us, when death stares us in the face, and all hope of escape fails, to present our petitions to God, in whose hand, as we have elsewhere seen, are the issues of death, and whose peculiar prerogative it is to restore life to those that are dead, (Ps. lxviii. 21.) As the combat is hard, he betakes himself to the promises of God, and invites others to do the same. The expression, *according to thy word*,[2] is an acknowledgment, that should he depart from God's word, no hope would be left for him; but as God has affirmed that the life of the faithful is in his hand, and under his protection, shut up as he was in the grave, he yet comforted himself with the expectation of life.

26. *I have declared my ways.* In the first part of this verse he affirms he had prayed sincerely, and had not imitated the proud, who, trusting to their own wisdom, fortitude, and opulence, make not God their refuge. That man is said *to*

[1] The original word for *my soul* might here, as in verse 28, be translated *I myself*, or *my life*, and then, *cleaving to the dust* may imply an apprehension of approaching death; and this agrees best with the petition. "By dust is here probably meant the sepulchre or grave, as in Ps. xxii. 15, 29, so that the Psalmist is to be understood to say, 'The dangers which surround me are such as threaten my death;' and he immediately adds, 'Revive me according to thy word,' *i. e.*, Make me glad by delivering me from these perils, in agreement with the promises which thou hast given me."—*Walford.*

[2] Arnobius and Augustine interpret *thy word* as signifying, in this place, *thy promise.* See verse 28, and Ps. xliv. 25.

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declare his ways to God, who presumes neither to attempt nor undertake any thing unless with His assistance, and, depending wholly on His providence, commits all his plans to His sovereign pleasure, and centres all his affections in Him; doing all this honestly, and not as the hypocrites, who profess one thing with their lips, and conceal another within their hearts. He adds, that *he was heard*, which was of great importance in making him cherish good hope for the future.

In the second part of the verse he solemnly declares, that he holds nothing more dear than the acquiring of a true understanding of the law. There are not a few who make known their desires unto God, but then they would that he would yield to their extravagant passions. And, therefore, the prophet affirms that he desires nothing more than to *be well instructed in God's statutes*. This statement is strengthened by the next verse, in which he once more asks the knowledge of these to be communicated to him. In both passages it must be carefully observed, that with the law of God set before us, we will reap little benefit from merely perusing it, if we have not his Spirit as our internal teacher.

Some expositors will have the word which I have translated, *I will meditate*, to be, *I will entreat or argue*, and thus the Hebrew term שׁוּחַ, *shuach*, is referred both to the words and thoughts. The latter meaning is most in accordance with the scope of the passage. I take the import of the prophet's words to be this:—That I may meditate upon thy wondrous works, make me to understand thy commandments. We will have no relish for the law of God until he sanctify our minds, and render them susceptible of tasting heavenly wisdom. And from this disrelish springs indifference, so that it is a grievous thing for the world to give a respectful attention to the law of God, having no savour for the admirable wisdom contained in it. With great propriety, therefore, does the prophet pray that this way may be opened to him by the gift of knowledge. From these words we are instructed, that in proportion to the spirit of knowledge given to us, our regard for the law of God, and our delight in meditating on it, ought to increase.

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28. *My soul droppeth away for grief.* As a little before he said that his soul cleaved to the dust, so now, almost in the same manner, he complains that it melted away with grief. Some are of opinion that he alludes to tears, as if he had said that his soul was dissolved in tears. But the simpler meaning is, that his strength was poured out like water. The verb is in the future tense, yet it denotes a continued action. The prophet assures himself of a remedy for this his extreme sorrow, provided God stretch out his hand towards him. Formerly, when almost lifeless, he entertained the expectation of a revival through the grace of God; now also, by the same means, he cherishes the hope of being restored to renovated and complete vigour, notwithstanding he was nearly consumed. He repeats the expression, *according to thy word*, because, apart from his word, God's power would afford us little comfort. But when he comes to our aid, even should our courage and strength fail, his promise is abundantly efficacious to fortify us.

29. *Take away from me the way of falsehood.* Knowing how prone the nature of man is to vanity and falsehood, he first asks the sanctification of his thoughts, lest, being entangled by the snares of Satan, he fall into error. Next, that he may be kept from falsehood, he prays to be fortified with the doctrine of the law. The second clause of the verse is interpreted variously. Some render it, *make thy law pleasant to me.* And as the law is disagreeable to the flesh, which it subdues and keeps under, there is good cause why God should be asked to render it acceptable and pleasant to us. Some expound it, *have mercy upon me according to thy law*, as if the prophet should draw pity from the fountain-head itself, because God in his law promised it to the faithful. Both of these meanings appear to me forced; and, therefore, I am more disposed to adopt another, *freely grant to me thy law.* The original term חָנֵּנִי, *channeni*, cannot be translated otherwise in Latin than, *gratify thou me;* an uncouth and barbarous expression I admit, yet that will give me little concern, provided my readers comprehend the prophet's

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meaning.[1] The amount is, that being full of blindness, nothing is more easy than for us to be greatly deceived by error. And, therefore, unless God teach us by the Spirit of wisdom, we will presently be hurried away into various errors. The means of our being preserved from error are stated to consist in his instructing us in his law. He makes use of the term *to gratify*. "It is indeed an incomparable kindness that men are directed by thy law, but in consequence of thy kindness being unmerited, I have no hesitation in asking of thee to admit me as a participator of this thy kindness." If the prophet, who for some time previous served God, in now aspiring after farther attainments, does not ask for a larger measure of grace to be communicated to him meritoriously, but confesses it to be the free gift of God, then that impious tenet, which obtains in the papacy, that an increase of grace is awarded to merit as deserving of it, must fall to the ground.

30. *I have chosen the way of truth.* In this and the following verse he affirms that he was so disposed as to desire nothing more than to follow righteousness and truth. It is, therefore, with great propriety he employs the term *to choose*. The old adage, that man's life is as it were at the point where two ways meet, refers not simply to the general tenor of human life, but to every particular action of it. For no sooner do we undertake any thing, no matter how small, than we are grievously perplexed, and as if hurried off by a tempest, are confounded by conflicting counsels. Hence the prophet declares, that in order constantly to pursue the right path, he had resolved and fully determined not to relinquish the truth. And thus he intimates that he was not entirely exempted from temptations, yet that he had surmounted them by giving himself up to the conscientious observance of the law.

The last clause of the verse, *I have set thy judgments before me*, relates to the same subject. There would be no fixed choice on the part of the faithful, unless they steadily con-

[1] "On pourroit dire en francois, Donne moy gratuitement."—*Fr.* "One can say in French, Give me gratuitously."

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templated the law, and did not suffer their eyes to wander to and fro. In the subsequent verse he not only asserts his entertaining this holy affection for the law, but also combines it with prayer, that he might not become ashamed and enfeebled under the derision of the ungodly, while he gave himself wholly to the law of God. Here he employs the same term as formerly, when he said his soul cleaved to the dust, and, in doing so, affirms he had so firmly taken hold of God's law, that he cannot be separated from it. From his expressing a fear lest he might be put to shame or overwhelmed with reproach, we learn that the more sincerely a man surrenders himself to God, the more will he be assailed by the tongues of the vile and the venomous.

32. *I will run the way of thy commandments.* The meaning of the prophet is, that when God shall inspire him with love for his law, he will be vigorous and ready, nay, even steady, so as not to faint in the middle of his course. His words contain an implied admission of the supineness and inability of men to make any advancement in well-doing until God enlarge their hearts. No sooner does God expand their hearts, than they are fitted not only for walking, but also for running in the way of his commandments. He reminds us that the proper observance of the law consists not merely in external works,—that it demands willing obedience, so that the heart must, to some extent, and in some way, enlarge itself. Not that it has the self-determining power of doing this, but when once its hardness and obstinacy are subdued, it moves freely without being any longer contracted by its own narrowness. Finally, this passage tells us, when God has once enlarged our hearts, there will be no lack of power, because, along with proper affection, he will furnish ability, so that our feet will be ready to run.

ה 33. *Teach me, O Jehovah! the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it unto the end.*

ה 34. *Make me to understand, and I will observe thy law; and keep it with my whole heart.*

ה 35. *Direct me in the way of thy statutes; for in it does my heart take pleasure.*

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ה 36. *Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.*

ה 37. *Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity; in thy way quicken me.*

ח 38. *Confirm thy word to thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.*

ח 39. *Remove from me the reproach of which I am afraid: for thy judgments are good.*

ח 40. *Lo! I have a desire to thy commandments: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

33. *Teach me, O Jehovah! the way of thy statutes.* He again presents the same prayer which he has already frequently done in this psalm, it being of the last importance for us to know that the main thing in our life consists in having God for our governor. The majority of mankind think of anything rather than this, as that which they ought to ask from God. The Holy Spirit, therefore, often inculcates this desire, and we ought always to keep it in mind, that not only the unexperienced and unlearned, but those who have made great progress, may not cease to aspire after farther advancement. And as the Spirit of understanding comes from above, they should seek to be guided by his invisible agency to the proper knowledge of the law.

In the second clause of the verse the prophet points out the particular kind of doctrine of which he treats, that which virtually and effectually tends to renovate the heart of man. Interpreters explain the word עֵקֶב, *ekeb*, two ways. Some would have it to denote wages or reward, and then the Psalmist's meaning would be: After I have been well instructed, then shall I know that those who apply themselves to the observance of thy law will not labour in vain; and, therefore, for the sake of the reward, I will keep thy commandments, persuaded that thou wilt never disappoint thy servants. Others render it, *until the end*, because those whom God teaches he teaches successfully, and, at the same time, strengthens them for prosecuting their journey without feeling lassitude or languor by the way, and enables them to persevere with constancy until they arrive at the termination of their course. I am far from supposing that he has no

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reference to the grace of perseverance. Let my readers, however, consider whether this verse may not be taken simply as the words stand in the original. The preposition *until* is not expressed by the prophet, who merely says, *I will keep the end.* "Lord, I have need of constant teaching, that I may not fall short of, but keep my eye continually upon my mark; for thou commandest me to run in thy course, on condition that death alone should be the goal. Unless thou teach me daily, this perseverance will not be found in me. But if thou guide me, I will be constantly upon the watch, and will never turn away my eyes from my end, or aim." In my version I have inserted the commonly received reading.

34. *Make me to understand.* We are here informed that true wisdom consists in being wise according to the law of God, that it may preserve us in fear and obedience to him. In asking God to confer this wisdom upon him, he owns that men, in consequence of their natural blindness, aim at anything rather than this. And, indeed, it is quite foreign to the notions usually prevalent among mankind to strain every nerve to keep God's law. The world esteems as wise those only who look well to their own interests, are acute and politic in temporal matters, and who even excel in the art of beguiling the simple. In opposition to such a sentiment, the prophet pronounces men to be void of true understanding as long as the fear of God does not predominate among them. For himself he asks no other prudence than the surrendering of himself entirely to God's direction. At the same time, he acknowledges this to be the special gift of God, which none can procure by his own power or policy; for were each adequate to be his own teacher in this matter, then this petition would be superfluous.

Moreover, as the observance of the law is no common occurrence, he employs two terms in reference to it. "Lord, it is a high and hard thing to keep thy law strictly as it ought, which demands from us purity beyond what we are able to attain; yet, depending on the heavenly illumination of thy Spirit, I will not cease my endeavours to keep it." The fol-

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lowing, however, renders the meaning more clear: "Give me understanding to keep and observe thy law with my whole heart." Mention is made of *the whole heart*, to tell us how far they are from the righteousness of the law who obey it only in the letter, doing nothing deserving of blame in the sight of men. God puts a restraint principally on the heart, that genuine uprightness may flourish there, whose fruits may afterwards appear in the life. This spiritual observance of the law is a most convincing evidence of the necessity of being divinely prepared and formed for it.

35. *Direct me in the path.* The frequent repetition of this phraseology by the prophet is not to be considered as redundant. Seeing that the end of man's existence ought to consist in profiting in God's school, we nevertheless perceive how the world distracts him by its allurements, and how he also forms for himself a thousand avocations calculated to withdraw his thoughts from the main business of his life. The next clause of the verse, *in it I take pleasure*, must be carefully attended to. For it is an indication of rare excellence when a person so arranges his sentiments and affections as to renounce all the enticements pleasant to the flesh, and take delight in nothing so much as in the service of God. The prophet had already attained to this virtue, but he still perceives that he is not yet perfect. Therefore, that his desire may be fully accomplished, he solicits fresh assistance from God, according to the saying of Paul, "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," (Phil. ii. 13.) Let it be remembered, that he does not boast of the inherent working of his nature, but sets forth the grace he has received, that God may complete the work he has begun. "Lord, thou hast given me courage, grant me also strength." Hence, in the term *pleasure* there is an implied opposition to the lusts of the flesh, which keep the hearts of mankind fettered by their enticements.

36. *Incline my heart.* In this verse he confesses the human heart to be so far from yielding to the justice of God, that it is more inclined to follow an opposite course. Were we

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naturally and spontaneously inclined to the righteousness of the law, there would be no occasion for the petition of the Psalmist, *Incline my heart.* It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious, until God by his grace change them. This confession on the part of the prophet must not be overlooked, That the natural corruption of man is so great, that he seeks for any thing rather than what is right, until he be turned by the power of God to new obedience, and thus begin to be inclined to that which is good.

In the second clause of the verse the prophet points to those impediments which prevent mankind from attaining to the desire of righteousness; their being inclined to covetousness. By a figure of speech,[1] in which a part is put for the whole, the species is put for the genus. The Hebrew term בצע, *batsang*, signifies *to use violence*, or *to covet*, or *to defraud;* but covetousness is most in accordance with the spirit of the passage, provided we admit the prophet to have selected this species, "the root of all evils," to demonstrate that nothing is more opposed to the righteousness of God, (1 Tim. vi. 10.) We are here instructed generally, that we are so much under the influence of perverse and vicious affections, our hearts abhor the study of God's law, until God inspire us with the desire for that which is good.

37. *Turn away mine eyes.* By these words we are taught that all our senses are so filled with vanity, that, until refined and rectified, their alienation from the pursuit of righteousness is no matter of surprise. In the former verse he informed us of the reigning of that depravity in the hearts of men, which he now says reaches also to the outward senses. "The disease of covetousness not only lurks in our hearts, but spreads over every part, so that neither eyes, ears, feet, nor hands, have escaped its baneful influence; in a word, nothing is exempted from corruption." And we know, assuredly, that the guilt of original sin is not confined to one faculty of man only; it pervades his whole constitution. If our eyes must be turned away from vanity by the special grace of

[1] Per Synecdochen.

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God, it follows, that, as soon as they are opened, they are eagerly set on the impostures of Satan, by which they are beset on all sides. If Satan only laid snares for us, and were we possessed of sufficient prudence to guard against his deceits, it could not, with propriety, be said that God turned away our eyes from vanity; but, as they are naturally set upon sinful allurements, there is need for their being withdrawn from them. As often, then, as we open our eyes, we must not forget that two gates are opened for the devil to enter our hearts, unless God guard us by his Holy Spirit. The remarks which he makes, in reference to the eyes, are equally applicable to the other senses, inasmuch as he again employs that figure of speech, by which a part is taken for the whole.

The other clause of the verse corresponds well with the meaning here given. Others may propose different interpretations; I think, however, the following is the most natural: Lord, as the whole life of mankind is accursed, so long as they employ their powers in committing sin, grant that the power which I possess may aspire after nothing except the righteousness which thou appointest us. The better to manifest this, we must lay it down as a first principle, that seeing, hearing, walking, and feeling, are God's precious gifts; that our understandings and will, with which we are furnished, are a still more valuable gift; and, after all, there is no look of the eyes, no motion of the senses, no thought of the mind, unmingled with vice and depravity. Such being the case, the prophet, with good reason, surrenders himself entirely to God, for the mortification of the flesh, that he might begin to live anew.

38. *Confirm thy word unto thy servant.* Here we have briefly set forth the sole end and legitimate use of prayer, which is, that we may reap the fruits of God's promises. Whence it comes to pass, that they commit sin who utter vague and incoherent desires. For we perceive the prophet allows not himself to petition or wish any thing but what God hath condescended to promise. And certainly their presumption is great, who rush into the presence of God

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without any call from his word; as if they would make him subservient to their humour and caprice. The argument by which the Psalmist enforces his plea deserves to be noticed; *because I am devoted to thy fear.* The relative אֲשֶׁר, *asher*, in this place bears the signification of the causal conjunction, *because* or *for*. The prophet intimates that he does not content himself with mere temporal enjoyments, as worldly men do; and that he did not make a preposterous abuse of God's promises, to secure the delights of the flesh, but that he made his fear and reverence his aim. And truly the best assurance which we can have of obtaining our requests is when these and God's service harmonize, and our sole desire is that he may reign in and over us.

39. *Take away my reproach.* It is not certain to what reproach he alludes. Knowing that many calumniators were on the watch to find occasion for reviling him, should they happen to detect him in any offence, it is not without reason he dreaded lest he might fall into such disgrace, and that by his own fault. Probably he might be apprehensive of some other reproach, aware that wicked men shamefully and injuriously slander the good generally, and, by their calumnies, distort and pervert their good actions. The concluding clause, *Because the judgments of God are good,* is the reason why God should put to silence the mischievous tongues, which pour out the venom of their malice without shame against the innocent, who are reverently observing his law. If any be inclined to view the word *reproach* as directed against God himself, such an interpretation is by no means objectionable, That the prophet, whose aim it was to stand approved as to his life in God's sight, merely desired, when he appeared before his tribunal, not to be judged as a reprobate man; just as if, with great zeal and magnanimity, he would despise all the empty talk of the men of the world, provided he stood upright in God's sight. Above all, it becomes holy men to dread the reproach of being suffused with shame at God's judgment-seat.

40. *Behold, I have a desire to thy precepts.* This is a repe-

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tition of what he declared a little before, with regard to his pious affection, and his love of righteousness; and that nothing was wanting but God to complete the work which he had commenced. If this interpretation be admitted, then, *to be quickened in the righteousness of God*, will be tantamount to being quickened in the way. The term *righteousness* is often put in this psalm for the law of God, or the rule of a righteous life. This view tends to make the two parts of the verse accord with one another. "Lord, this is now a remarkable kindness thou hast done me, in having inspired me with a holy desire to keep thy law; one thing is still necessary, that this same virtue pervade my whole life." But as the word *righteousness* is ambiguous, my readers may, if they choose, understand it thus: Restore, defend, and maintain me for the sake of thy goodness, which thou art wont to show to all thy people. I have already pointed out the exposition which I prefer.

ו 41. *And let thy mercies come to me, O Jehovah! and thy salvation, according to thy word.*

ו 42. *And I will answer a word to him who reproacheth me, because I have trusted in thy word.*

ו 43. *And take not the word of truth too long out of my mouth, because I hope for thy judgments.*

ו 44. *And I will keep thy law always, even for ever and ever.*

ו 45. *And I will walk at ease;*[1] *because I have sought thy statutes.*

ו 46. *And I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed.*

ו 47. *And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.*

ו 48. *And I will lift up my hands to thy statutes, which I have loved, and will meditate on thy precepts.*

41. *Let thy mercies come to me.* There can be no doubt, that, in mentioning the *mercy of God* first, and afterwards *his salvation*, the Psalmist, according to the natural order, puts the cause before the effect. By adopting this arrangement, he acknowledges that there is no salvation for him but

[1] "Au large."—*Fr.*

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in the pure mercy of God. And while he desires a gracious salvation, he, at the same time, relies on the promise, as we have already elsewhere seen.

In the second verse he boasts that he is furnished with the best defence against the calumnies of his enemies, arising from his trust in the word of God. We may resolve the future tense into the optative mood, as many do: "O Lord, since *I have trusted in thy word*, grant that my mouth with all boldness may repel the slanders which they utter against me, and suffer me not to be silent when they load me with unmerited reproach." Whichever of these meanings we adopt, we are taught that there will always be evil-speakers, who will not cease to defame the children of God, though they be entirely undeserving of such treatment. It is somewhat dubious to what particular kind of reproach he refers; for the ungodly not only cover the children of God with ignominy, but also make their faith the subject of ridicule. I prefer the following interpretation, because it agrees best with the context, and David is here placing his trust in God in opposition to their derision. "I shall have something to reply to the base mockery of the enemies who injure me without cause, in that God never disappoints those who place their confidence in him." If any one be inclined to consider the passage as embracing both meanings, I offer no objection to it. Besides, he does not simply say, that he trusted in God, but that he also trusted in his word, which is the ground of his trust. We must carefully attend to the correspondence and mutual relation between the term *word*, in the first part of the verse, and that in the other. Were not God, by his Word, to furnish us with another word for our defence, we would instantly be overwhelmed with the insolence of our enemies. If, then, we wish to be proof against the attacks of the world, the commencement and foundation of our magnanimity is here pointed out to us,—our trusting in God's word, guarded by which, the Spirit of God calls upon us boldly to contemn the virulent blasphemies of the ungodly. And to qualify us for repelling such blasphemies, he connects the word of hope with the word of confession.

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43. *Take not the word of truth too long out of my mouth.*[1] It may be asked, why he demands rather to have his tongue filled with, than his heart fortified by, the *word of truth;* inasmuch as the latter takes the precedence, both in point of order and of excellence. What will it profit us to be fluent and eloquent in speech, if our hearts are destitute of faith? On the other hand, wherever there is firm faith, there, too, speech will flow ultroneously. My reply is, that David was not so concerned about outward confession as not to give the preference to the faith of the heart; but considering that he is making his address to God, there is nothing strange in his making mention only of the former, under which, however, he includes also the latter. "Lord, support not only my heart by faith, lest I be overwhelmed with temptation, but grant me also freedom of speech, that I may fearlessly sound forth thy praises among men." We observe, when he asks to be endued with boldness of speech, that he begins with the heart.

It may be farther inquired here, why he says *too long*, just as if he were not afraid of being deprived of the word of truth for a short time. Such a supposition were most absurd, seeing we must watch every moment lest we be overtaken by the enemy, when we are unarmed and powerless. The solution of this difficulty must be drawn from our own experience; for in this, the infirmity of our flesh, it is almost impossible but that, occasionally, even the stoutest heart will quail under the violent assaults of Satan. And although their faith fails not, yet it shakes, and they do not find such presence of mind, as that there is constantly a uniform train of speech, and a prompt reply to the derisions of the ungodly; but, on the contrary, they rather begin to stagger and quake for a short

[1] "*O take not, &c.* This verse seems to admit of either of the two following interpretations: 'Suffer me not to desist utterly from making an open profession of true religion; for I wait for thy promises:' or, 'Suffer me not to be reproached with falsehood, (for having asserted that thou wouldest take vengeance on the wicked,) because I have looked for thy judgments,' *i. e.*, thy penal judgments. Calvin favours the former interpretation, the latter is Le Clerc's."—*Cresswell.* Walford, by *word*, understands the answer that the Psalmist had to make to the accusations of his enemies: and observes, "This answer, which asserted his innocency of the crimes with which they charged him, he declares to be altogether true; and he entreats that God, as a judge, would not suffer him to be deprived of the benefit of that answer, but pronounce a righteous sentence between them."

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time. Conscious of this weakness, which is perceptible in all mankind, he accommodates his prayer in the following manner: "Though I am not always prepared with that boldness of speech which is desirable, suffer me not to continue long silent." By this language the prophet tacitly admits, that he had not been so stedfast and bold as was requisite, but that he was, as it were, struck speechless by reason of fear. Whence we may learn, that the faculty of speaking freely is no more in our power than are the affections of the heart. As far, then, as God directs our tongues, they are prepared for ready utterance; but no sooner does he withdraw the spirit of magnanimity, than not only our hearts faint, or rather fail, but also our tongues become mute. The cause of this is subjoined in these words, *for I have waited for thy judgments*, for so he literally expresses himself. From which we conclude, that *judgments* refer not merely to the precepts of the law, but also to the promises, which constitute the true foundation of our confidence. Some render it, *I was afraid of thy judgments*, deriving the word here employed from the root חול, *chul*; which translation I am unable to say whether it be suitable or not. But of this I am certain, that to understand *judgments* as equivalent to *punishments*, is quite foreign to the design of the prophet.

44. *I will keep thy law continually.* He resolves to devote himself to the study of the law, not for a short time only, but even to the termination of his life. The employing of three synonymous words, תמיד, *tamid*, עולם, *olam*, עד, *ed*, so far from being viewed as a superfluous accumulation of terms, contains an implied indication, that, unless the faithful make a strenuous and steady opposition, the fear of God may be gradually effaced from their minds by various temptations, and they will lose the affection which they bear for the law. In order, therefore, that he may be the better prepared for meeting these trials, he alludes to the difficulty and danger connected with them.

The next verse may be read as expressing a desire that he might walk. Be this as it may, we retain the commonly received reading, That David exults at the thought of his

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path becoming plain and easy, in consequence of his seeking diligently after God's precepts; that is, *to walk at ease.* The ways of men are frequently rugged and obstructed, because they themselves lay various stumblingblocks in them, or entangle themselves in many inextricable windings. Hence it comes to pass, that while none will submit to the word of God as their rule, every man endures the punishment legitimately due to such arrogance. On all sides God lays snares for us, puts pitfalls in our way, causes us to fall in with paths broken and rugged, and at last shuts us up in a bottomless pit: and by how much the more politic a man is, by so much the more will he meet with obstructions in his path.

This verse teaches us that, if any man yield implicit obedience to God, he will receive this as his reward, that he shall walk with a calm and composed mind; and should he meet with difficulties, he will find the means of surmounting them. The faithful, however readily and submissively they give themselves up to God, may happen to find themselves involved in perplexity; nevertheless, the end contemplated by Paul is accomplished, that though they be in trouble and toil, yet they do not continue in irremediable distress, because it is the duty (so to speak) of God to point out a way for them where there seems to be no way, (2 Cor. iv. 8.) Moreover, when grievously oppressed, even then they walk at ease, for they commit the doubtful issue of events to God in such a manner, that, having him for their guide, they have no doubt they will come out boldly from the depths of distress.

46. *And I will speak of thy testimonies before kings.*[1] In these words he seems to believe that he is in possession of that which he formerly prayed for. Having said, "Take not away the word out of my mouth," and now, as if he had

[1] "Dr Delaney supposes that this is spoken in reference to Achish, king of Gath, whom David had instructed in the Jewish religion: but we have already seen that it is most likely that the psalm was compiled under the Babylonish captivity. But the words may, with more propriety, be referred to the case of Daniel, and other bold and faithful Israelites, who spoke courageously before Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. See the Books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah."—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

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obtained what he requested, he rises up, and maintains he will not be dumb, even were he called upon to speak in the presence of kings. There can be no question that he affirms he would willingly stand forward in vindication of the glory of God in the face of the whole world. He selects kings, who are generally more to be dreaded than other men, and haughtily shut the mouths of God's witnesses. Sometimes, indeed, it happens we will not hold out even in the presence of men in the humblest ranks of life. The moment a man sets himself in opposition to the word of God, we instinctively shrink back from fear; and that boldness of speech, of which we boasted at first, instantly disappears: but our want of courage is most palpable when we are summoned before the thrones of kings. And this is the reason why David asserts, that he will not only hold out against enemies among the meanest of men, but also will remain firm and fearless before kings. These words inform us that we have profited well and truly by God's word, when our hearts are so completely fortified against the fear of man, that we do not dread the presence of kings, even though all the world attempt to fill us with dejection and dismay. It is most unbecoming that God's glory should be obscured by their empty splendour.

47. *And I will delight myself.* The sentiment contained in this verse is similar to that which he had previously mentioned. The amount is, he held the commandments of God in such high esteem, that he experienced nothing more pleasant to him than the making of them his constant theme of meditation. By the term *delight*, he expresses the intensity of his love. The phrase, *I will lift up my hands*, refers to the same thing. It is a sure indication that we eagerly desire a thing when we stretch out the hands to grasp and enjoy it. This simile, therefore, denotes the ardour of his desire.[1] If

[1] "*The lifting up of the hands* is used in Scripture to denote, first, *praying*, (Ps. xxviii. 2; Lam. ii. 19; 1 Tim. ii. 8;) secondly, *blessing*, (Lev. xix. 22; Ps. xxii. 4;) thirdly, *swearing*, (Gen. xiv. 22; Deut. xxxii. 40; Ps. cvi. 26; Ezek. xxxvi. 7; Rev. x. 5;) fourthly, *setting about any undertaking*, (Gen. xli. 44; Ps. x. 13; Heb. xii. 12.) Aben Ezra, however, explains, (and perhaps rightly,) that the metaphor, in this place, is taken from the action of those who receive any one whom

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a man, by his mien and gait, pretend any such affection for the law of God, and yet pay no regard to it in the affairs of life, he would be justly chargeable with the basest hypocrisy. Again, he affirms, that that affection, so earnest and so ardent, springs from the sweetness of the law of God having knit our hearts to it. Finally, he says, he *would meditate on God's testimonies.* Along with the majority of commentators, I have no doubt that the word שׂוח, *shuach,* denotes that silent and secret musing in which the children of God exercise themselves.

ז 49. *Remember thy word to thy servant, in which thou hast made him hope.*
ז 50. *This is my consolation in my affliction: because thy word revives me.*
ז 51. *The proud have greatly scorned me: I have not turned aside from thy law.*
ז 52. *I called to mind thy judgments of old, O Jehovah! and comforted myself.*
ז 53. *Terror seized me, for the wicked who forsake thy law.*
ז 54. *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*
ז 55. *By night I remembered thy name, O Jehovah! and I keep thy law.*
ז 56. *This is done to me, because I have kept thy statutes.*

49. *Remember thy word.* He prays that God would really perform what he promised; for the event proves that he does not forget his word. That he is speaking of the promises we infer from the end of the verse, in which he declares, that cause was given him to hope, for which there could be no place unless grace had been presented to him. In the second verse he asserts, that though God still kept him in suspense, yet he reposed with confidence in his word. At the same time he informs us, that during his troubles and anxieties, he did not search after vain consolation as the world is wont to do, who look around them in all quarters to find something to mitigate their miseries; and if any allurements tickle their

they were glad or proud to see with uplifted hands."—*Cresswell.* Merrick explains the phrase thus: "I will reach out my hands with eagerness, in order to receive thy commandments."

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fancy, they make use of these as a remedy for alleviating their sorrows. On the contrary, the prophet says he was satisfied with the word of God itself; and that when all other refuges failed him, there he found life full and perfect; nevertheless, he covertly confesses, that if he do not acquire courage from the word of God, he will become like a dead man. The ungodly may sometimes experience elevation of spirit during their miseries, but they are totally destitute of this inward strength of mind. The prophet, then, had good reason for stating, that in the time of affliction the faithful experience animation and vigour solely from the *word of God inspiring them with life.* Hence, if we meditate carefully on his word, we shall live even in the midst of death, nor will we meet with any sorrow so heavy for which it will not furnish us with a remedy. And if we are bereft of consolation and succour in our adversities, the blame must rest with ourselves; because, despising or overlooking the word of God, we purposely deceive ourselves with vain consolation.

51. *The proud have greatly scorned me.* This example is eminently useful, as it serves to inform us, that though our honesty may render us obnoxious to the insults of the ungodly, we ought, by our unflinching constancy, to repel their pride, lest we should take a dislike to the law of God. Many who, in other respects, would be disposed to fear God, yield to this temptation. The earth has always been filled with the impious contemners of God, and at this day it is almost overrun with them. Wherefore, if we do not disregard their revilings, there will be no stability in our faith. In calling unbelievers *proud,* he applies to them a very appropriate designation: for their wisdom consists in despising God, lightly esteeming his judgments, trampling all piety under foot, and, in short, pouring contempt upon the celestial kingdom. Were they not blinded with pride, they would not follow such a headlong course. We must interpret the words in this manner: Though the proud have treated me with scorn, I have not turned aside from thy law. We must not overlook the particle *very much,* or greatly, which imports, that he was harassed, not merely occasionally or for a short time, by the un-

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godly, but that the attack was continued from day to day. Let us learn from these words, that the wicked, in consequence of their forming the great majority of mankind, arrogate to themselves the greater liberty. The number of the godly who worship God reverently is always small. Hence we must hold out against a large troop and rabble of the impious if we would maintain our integrity.

52. *I called to mind thy judgments of old, O Jehovah!* In this psalm, *the judgments of God* are generally taken for his statutes and decrees, that is, his *righteousnesses*.[1] In this place, in consequence of the qualifying phrase, *of old*, it is more probable that they refer to the examples by which God has made himself known as the righteous Judge of the world. Why does he say that the law of God has been from everlasting? This may to some extent be accounted for from the righteousness here mentioned not being of recent growth, but truly everlasting, because the written law is just an attestation of the law of nature, through means of which God recalls to our memory that which he has previously engraven on our hearts.

I am rather inclined to adopt another interpretation, That David remembered the judgments of God, by which he testified that he had established his law perpetually in the world. Such a settlement is very necessary for us; because, when God does not make bare his arm, his word frequently produces little impression. But when he takes vengeance upon the ungodly, he confirms what he had spoken; and this is the reason why in civil law penalties are called confirmations. The term accords better with God's judgments, by which he establishes the authority of his law, as if a true demonstration accompanied his words. And seeing he declares that he called to mind the most ancient of God's judgments, it becomes us to learn, that if his judgments are not displayed as frequently as we would desire, for the strengthening of our faith, this is owing to our ingratitude and apathy; for in

[1] "The Scriptures, like a true mirror, display the justice of God, in the punishment of sinners, and his goodness, in rendering righteousness." —*Dimock.*

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no past age have there been wanting clear demonstrations for this very purpose; and thus it may with truth be affirmed, that God's judgments have flowed in one continued manner from age to age, and that the reason why we have not perceived them is, our not deigning to open our eyes to behold them. If any one object, that it is contrary to the nature of his judgments to afford consolation to us, because they are calculated rather to strike us with terror, the answer is at hand,—that the faithful are made to tremble for fear of God's judgments, as far as is requisite for the mortification of their flesh. On the other hand, these supply them with a large source of consolation, from the fact of their learning from them, that God exercises his superintending providence over the human race. Farther, they learn, that after the wicked have revelled in licentiousness for a season, they shall at length be sisted before the judgment-seat of God; but that they themselves, after having patiently combated under such a Guardian of their welfare, can be in no doubt about their preservation.

53. *Terror seized me.*[1] This verse may be understood in two senses; either that the prophet was grievously afflicted when he saw God's law violated by the wicked, or that he was horror-struck at the thought of their perdition. Some would render it *ardour*, which does not so properly agree with the nature of the passage; I therefore abide by the term *fear*, by which I think his ardent zeal is pointed out, in that he was not only deeply grieved at the transgressions of the law, but held in the utmost detestation the impious boldness of those who lightly esteemed the law of God. At the

[1] The Hebrew word here used for *terror* is זלעפה, *zalaphah*, and is supposed to refer to the blasting or scorching wind, called the Simoom, well known to the Eastern nations. Accordingly, Michaelis reads, "A deadly East wind seizes me." Cocceius reads, "Horror, as a tempest, has seized upon me." "The sacred writer," says he, "represents the vehement commotion of his mind as resembling a violent commotion in the air." According to Dimock, זלעפה denotes, in this place, *the burning fever* which the pestilential winds in the East occasioned. The word occurs only three times in Scripture; here, in Ps. xi. 7, and in Lam. v. 10. Our translators have rendered it, in Ps. xi. 7, by *storm*, and in Lam. v. 10, in the margin, plurally by *terrors* or *storms*. See vol. i. p. 168, note.

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same time, it is worthy of notice, that it is no new ground of offence to the faithful, if numbers throw off God's yoke, and set up the standard of rebellion against him. This, I repeat, must be attended to, because many derive flimsy and frivolous pretexts for it, from the degeneracy of the age, as if they must needs howl while they live among wolves. In the days of David, we see there were many who apostatised from the faith, and yet, so far was he from being discouraged or dismayed by these things, that the fear of God rather kindled a holy indignation in his bosom. What is to be done, then, when surrounded by bad examples, but that we should vie with each other in holding them up to detestation? And here a contrast, if not directly stated, is implied, between the flattering unction which we apply to ourselves, believing that all is lawful which is common, and the horror with which the prophet tells us he was seized. If the wicked, haughtily and without restraint, set themselves in opposition to God, in consequence of our not being alive to his judgments, we convert that into an occasion of perverse confidence and insensibility. On the contrary, the prophet asserts that he was seized with horror, because, though he considered the long-suffering of God, on the one hand, yet, on the other, he was fully persuaded that he must, sooner or later, call for condign punishment.

54. *Thy statutes have been my songs.*[1] He repeats in different words what he had formerly mentioned, that the law of God was his sole or special delight during all his life. Singing is an indication of joy. The saints are pilgrims in this world, and must be regarded as God's children and heirs of heaven, from the fact that they are sojourners on earth. By the *house of their pilgrimage*, then, may be understood their journey through life. One circumstance merits particular notice, that David, during his exile from his native country, ceased not to draw consolation, amid all his hardships, from the law of God, or rather a joy which rose above all the sadness which

[1] "In the early ages, it was customary to versify the laws, that the people might learn them by heart, and sing them."—*Williams.*

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his banishment occasioned to him. It was a noble specimen of rare virtue, that when he was denied a sight of the temple, could not draw near to the sacrifices, and was deprived of the ordinances of religion, he yet never departed from his God. The phrase, the *house of his pilgrimage*, is employed, therefore, to enhance the conduct of David, who, when banished from his country, still retained the law of God deeply engraven on his heart, and who, amid the severity of that exile, which was calculated to deject his spirits, cheered himself by meditating upon the law of God.

55. *By night I remembered thy name, O Jehovah!* As the second clause of the verse depends on the first, I consider the whole verse as setting forth one and the same truth; and, therefore, the prophet means that he was induced, by the remembrance he had of God, to keep the law. Contempt of the law originates in this, that few have any regard for God; and hence, the Scripture, in condemning the impiety of men, declares that they *have forgotten* God, (Ps. l. 22; lxxviii. 11; cvi. 21.) To rectify this, David exhorts that the remembrance of God is the only remedy for preserving us in his fear, and in the observance of his law; and assuredly, as often as his majesty occurs to our minds, it will tend to humble us, and the very thought of it will provoke us to the cultivation of godliness. The word *night* is not intended by him to mean the remembering of God merely for a short time, but a perpetual remembrance of him; he, however, refers to that season in particular, because then almost all our senses are overpowered with sleep. "When other men are sleeping, God occurs to my thoughts during my sleep." He has another reason for alluding to the night-season, That we may be apprised, that though there was none to observe him, and none to put him in remembrance of it,—yea, though he was shrouded in darkness,—yet he was as solicitous to cherish the remembrance of God, as if he occupied the most public and conspicuous place.

56. *This was done to me.* I doubt not that the prophet, under the term זאת, *zoth*, comprehends all God's benefits;

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but as he comes before God in relation to blessings then being enjoyed by him, he speaks as if he were pointing to them. Hence, under this term is included an acknowledgment of all the benefits with which he had been crowned; or, at all events, he declares that God had borne testimony, by some signal deliverance, to the integrity of his conduct. He does not boast of meriting any thing, as the Pharisees in our day do, who, when they meet with any such matter in Scripture, pervert it to prove the merit of works. But the prophet had no other design, than to set himself in diametrical opposition to the despisers of God, who either impute all their prosperity to their own industry, or ascribe it to chance, and malignantly overlook or conceal God's superintending providence. He therefore calls upon himself to return to God, and invites others to follow his example, and exhorts them, that as God is an impartial judge, he will always reserve a recompense for piety. Probably, too, by this holy boasting he repels the base slanders of the ungodly, by which we lately saw he was grievously assailed.

ח 57. *Thou art my portion, O Jehovah! I have said I will keep thy words.*

ח 58. *I have earnestly besought thy face with my whole heart; have mercy upon me according to thy word.*

ח 59. *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*

ח 60. *I made haste, and did not delay to keep thy commandments.*

ח 61. *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me;*[1] *but I did not forget thy law.*

ח 62. *I will rise at midnight to praise thee for thy righteous judgments.*

ח 63. *I am a companion to all those who fear thee, and who keep thy precepts.*

ח 64. *O Jehovah! the earth is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes.*

57. *Thou art my portion, O Jehovah!* The meaning of this clause is doubtful, because the term *Jehovah* may be

[1] "Ou, les assemblees des meschans m'ont despouillé, ou pillé."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, the assemblies of the wicked have robbed me."

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rendered either in the nominative or vocative case, and the phrase, *I have said*, may relate either to the former or latter part of the verse. One lection then is, *Jehovah is my portion*, and, therefore, *I have resolved to observe thy law*. Another is, *O God! who art my portion, I have resolved to observe thy law*. A third is, *I have said, or have resolved, that God is my portion, in order to observe his law*. A fourth is, *I have said, or have resolved, O Lord! that my portion is to observe thy law;* and this is the reading of which I approve. The following interpretation is quite applicable, That God being our portion, ought to animate and encourage us to observe his law. We have already noticed in several other passages, that God is denominated the heritage of the faithful, because he alone is sufficient for their full and entire happiness. And seeing he has chosen us for his peculiar possession, it is only reasonable, on our part, that we should rest satisfied with him alone; and if we do this, our hearts will also be disposed to keep his law, and, renouncing all the lusts of the flesh, our supreme delight, and firm resolution, will be to continue in the same.

I have already said, that this exposition is not inconsistent with the scope of the passage, and that it furnishes a very useful doctrine. But the last and fourth reading, of which I remarked I approved, is more simple,—I am fully persuaded that my best portion consists in keeping God's law;—and this accords with the saying of Paul, "Godliness is the best gain," (1 Tim. vi. 6.) David here draws a comparison between the keeping of the law, and the imaginary good which captivates the ambition of mankind. "Let every one covet what seems to him good, and revel in his own pleasures; I have no ground to envy them, provided I retain this as my portion, the complete surrender of myself to the word of God."

58. *I have earnestly besought thy face.* In this verse David asserts, that he still persevered in the exercise of prayer; for without prayer faith would become languid and lifeless. The manner in which he expresses himself, which, in other languages, might be unpolished, among the Hebrews, expresses that familiar communication to which God admits, and even

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invites his servants when they come into his presence. The substance of his prayers, and the sum of his desires, he comprehends in a single sentence; namely, that he implored the mercy of God, the sure hope of which he had formed from his word. Let us observe, then, in the first place, we are aroused from our supineness, that we may exercise our faith by prayer. In the second place, the principal thing for which we ought to pray is, that God, out of his free grace, may be favourable to us, look on our affliction, and grant us relief. God does, indeed, aid us in a variety of ways, and our necessities also are innumerable; still the thing which we must principally and particularly request is, that he will have mercy upon us, which is the source of every other blessing. And, in the last place, that we may not present prayers that have no meaning, let us learn that God, in all his promises, is set before us as if he were our willing debtor.

59. *I thought upon my ways.*[1] The amount is, that after the prophet had paid due regard to his manner of life, his only aim then was to follow the teaching of the law. In these words he intimates indirectly, that if it be inquired why men go astray, and are miserably distracted amidst conflicting impulses, the reason is, their thoughtlessly indulging themselves in the gratification of their passions. Every man watches most carefully, and applies all his energy to whatever his inclination may lead him, but all are blind in choosing the object which they ought to pursue; or rather, as if their eyes were sealed, they are either hurried away inconsiderately, or else, through carelessness, wander imperceptibly from one object to another. One thing is certain, that there is no one who carefully considers his ways; and, therefore, it is not without reason the prophet exhorts us, that the commence-

[1] "*I thought on my ways.* חשבתי, *chashabti*, I deeply pondered them; I turned them upside down: I viewed my conduct on all sides. The word as used here is a metaphor taken from *embroidering*, where the *figure* must appear the *same* on the *one side* as it does on the *other*: therefore the cloth must be turned on each side every time the needle is set in, to see that the stitch be fairly set. Thus narrowly and scrupulously did the Psalmist examine his conduct; and the result was, a deep conviction that he had departed from the way of God and truth."—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

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ment of a godly life consists in men awaking from their lethargy, examining their ways, and, at last, wisely considering what it is to regulate their conduct properly. He next instructs us, that when a person is inclined in good earnest to frame the course of his life well, there is nothing better than for him to follow the direction which the Lord points out. In fact, were not men infatuated, they would universally and unanimously make choice of God to be the guide of their life.

60. *I made haste.* Though the words are in the past tense, they denote a continued act. The prophet declares with what promptitude he dedicated himself to the service of God. Diligence and dispatch demonstrate the fervour of his zeal. Next, in saying that he *delayed not*,[1] this, according to the Hebrew idiom, gives intensity to the idea conveyed by the phrase, *I made haste.* As among the Hebrews, *to speak and not to keep silence* is equivalent to speaking freely, unreservedly, and without dissimulation, as the occasion demands, so to *make haste and not delay* is to run quickly without doubt or delay. If we reflect on our own listlessness, and on the snares which Satan never fails to put in our way, we will at once perceive that these words are not added in vain. For let a man be ever so desirous of applying himself truly and heartily to the righteousness of God, yet, according to Paul, we know that "he does not the thing that he would," (Rom. vii. 15, 18, 19.) Although no outward obstacle may stand in our way, yet we are so retarded by impediments within, that nothing is more difficult than to make haste to keep the law of God. At the same time we must remember, that the prophet is here speaking comparatively in reference to those who are chargeable with procrastination during the greater part of their life, and who draw near to God, not only hesi-

[1] "The original word, which we translate *delayed not*, is amazingly emphatical. ולא התמהמהתי, *velo hethmahmaheti*, I did not stand *what, what, whating;* or, as we used to express the same sentiment, *shilly-shallying* with myself; I was *determined*, and so set out. The *Hebrew* word, as well as the *English*, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended, because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice."—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

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tatingly and tardily, but also purposely loiter in their course, or else prevent themselves from coming by their tortuous ways. The prophet did not manifest more alacrity in serving God than Paul; all he intends, therefore, is, that having surmounted all obstacles which lay in his way, he prosecuted his journey with rapidity. And by his example he teaches us, that the pleas which we offer in extenuation of our indolence, either arising from the impediments presented by the world or our own infirmity, are vain and frivolous.

61. *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me.* Those who translate חבלי, *cheblei*, by *sorrows*, bring out no natural meaning, and perplex themselves as well as wrest the passage. Two readings then remain, either of which may be admitted: *The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me*, or *The companies of the wicked have robbed me.*[1] Whether we adopt the one or the other of these readings, what the prophet intends to declare is, that when Satan assailed the principles of piety in his soul, by grievous temptations, he continued with undeviating stedfastness in the love and practice of God's law. *Cords* may, however, be understood in two ways; either, first, as denoting the deceptive allurements by which the wicked endeavoured to get him entangled in their society; or, secondly, the frauds which they practised to effect his ruin. If the first sense is preferred, David intimates that he had manifested a rare virtue, in continuing in the observance of God's law, even when the wicked seemed to have involved him in their nets; but as it is more generally agreed that the verb עוד, *ived*, signifies *to despoil* or *rob*, let us adopt this interpretation—That the prophet being assailed by troops of the ungodly, and afterwards robbed and rifled at their

[1] "*The congregation of the ungodly have robbed me.—Common Prayer Book.* Rather *the cords* of the wicked have infolded me; *i. e.*, their machinations have been directed against me, and not without effect. A cord, however, from its being composed of many strings twisted together, was used *metaphorically* by the Hebrews, as the word *band* is by us, to denote a collection of men: and it is accordingly, in 1 Sam. x. 5, 10, rendered in our English Bible by *company*, in which sense it is here taken in the version of our Book of Common Prayer, after the Chaldee: the Septuagint gives the *literal* translation of the word."—*Cresswell.*

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pleasure, never deserted his ground. This was a proof of singular fortitude; for when we are exposed to dangers and wrongs of a more than ordinary kind, if God does not succour us we immediately begin to doubt of his providence: it seems to be of no advantage for a man to be godly; we imagine also that we may lawfully take revenge; and amidst these waves, the remembrance of the Divine law is easily lost, and, as it were, submerged. But the prophet assures us, that to continue to love the law, and to practise righteousness, when we are exposed as a prey to the ungodly, and perceive no help from God, is an evidence of genuine piety.

62. *I will rise at midnight to praise thee.* In this verse he shows not only that he approved and embraced with his whole heart whatever the Divine law contains, but that he also gave evidence of his gratitude to God for having made him partaker of so great a blessing. It seems to be quite a common thing professedly to assent to God when he teaches us by his law; for who would dare to lift up his voice against Him? But still the world is very far from acknowledging that the truth which he has revealed is in all respects reasonable. In the first place, such is the rebellion of our corrupt nature, that every man would have somewhat either altered or taken away. Again, if men had their choice, they would rather be governed by their own will than by the word of God. In short, human reason, as well as human passions, is widely at variance with the Divine law. He then has profited not a little, who both obediently embraces revealed truth, and, taking sweet delight in it, gives thanks to God for it. The prophet, however, does not simply declare that he magnifies God's righteous judgments; he also affirms that *he rose at midnight* to do so, by which he expresses the earnestness of his desire; for the studies and cares which break our sleep necessarily imply great earnestness of soul. He also, at the same time, intimates, that in bearing his testimony in behalf of the Divine law, he was far from being influenced by ostentation, since in his secret retirement, when no human eye was upon him, he pronounced the highest encomiums on God's righteous judgments.

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63. *I am a companion to all those who fear thee.* He does not simply speak of the brotherly love and concord which true believers cultivate among themselves, but intimates that, whenever he met with any individual who feared God, he gave him his hand in token of fellowship, and that he was not only one of the number of God's servants, but also their helper. Such concord is undoubtedly required in all the godly, that they may contribute to each other's advancement in the fear of God. There seems to be a tacit comparison between this holy combination, by which the faithful mutually keep up and foster among themselves the worship of God and true godliness, and the impious associations which prevail every where in the world. We see how worldly men array their troops against God, and assist one another in their attempts to overthrow his worship. The more then is it necessary for the children of God to be stirred up to the maintenance of a holy unity. The Psalmist commends the faithful, first, for their fearing God, and, secondly, for their observing the law. The fear of God is the root or origin of all righteousness, and by dedicating our life to His service, we manifest that His fear dwells in our hearts.

64. *O Jehovah! the earth is full of thy mercy.* Here the prophet beseeches God, in the exercise of his infinite goodness, which is reflected in every part of the world, graciously to make him a partaker of the treasure of heavenly wisdom—a manner of prayer which is very emphatic. When, therefore, he says *that the earth is full of God's mercy*, it is a kind of earnest entreaty. He not only magnifies the goodness of God, in general, (as he does in other places,) in leaving no part of the world devoid of the proofs of his liberality, and in exercising it not only towards mankind, but also towards the brute creation. What does he then? He desires that the mercy of God, which is extended to all creatures, may be manifested towards him in one thing, and that is, by enabling him to make progress in the knowledge of the Divine law. Whence we gather, that he accounted the gift of understanding as an inestimable treasure. Now, if to be endued with the spirit of understanding is a chief token of God's favour, our want

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of this, proceeding from our own unbelief, is an indication of our alienation from him. It behoves us to remember what we have stated elsewhere, that it is an evidence that we have given ourselves up to the most shameful sloth, when, contented with a superficial knowledge of Divine truth, we are, in a great measure, indifferent about making further progress, seeing so renowned a teacher of the Church laboured with the greatest ardour to become more and more acquainted with God's statutes. Besides, it is certain that he does not here treat of external teaching, but of the inward illumination of the mind, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The law was exhibited to all without distinction; but the prophet, well aware that unless he were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, it would be of little advantage to him, prays that he may be taught effectually by supernatural influence.

ט 65. *O Jehovah! thou hast done good to thy servant, according to thy word.*
ט 66. *Teach me goodness of taste and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.*
ט 67. *Before I was brought low I went astray: but now I keep thy word.*
ט 68. *Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.*
ט 69. *The proud have weaved lies against me: but I will keep thy statutes with my whole heart.*
ט 70. *Their heart is fat as grease: but I delight in thy law.*
ט 71. *It has been good for me that I was afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*
ט 72. *The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.*

65. *O Jehovah! thou hast done good to thy servant.* Some understand this generally, as if the prophet protested that, in whatever way God dealt with him, he took it in good part, convinced that it would ultimately issue in his welfare; but as express mention is made of the Divine word or promise, the prophet, I have no doubt, celebrates the faithfulness of God in performing the grace which he had promised. I have really experienced (as if he had said) that Thou art true, and dost not delude thy servants with empty words. Special

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reference is therefore here made to God's promises, because thence all his benefits flow to us, not, indeed, as from the original fountain-head, but, as it were, by conduit pipes. Although his free goodness is the only cause which induces him to deal bountifully with us, yet we can hope for nothing at his hand until he first bring himself under obligation to us by his word.

66. *Teach me goodness of taste and knowledge.* After having confessed that he had found, by experience, the faithfulness of God to his promises, David here adds a request similar to what is contained in the 64th verse, namely, that he may grow in right understanding; although the phraseology is somewhat different; for instead of *thy statutes*, as in that verse, he here uses *goodness of taste and knowledge.* As the verb טַעַם, *taäm*, signifies *to taste*, the noun which is derived from it properly denotes *taste.* It is, however, applied to the mind. David, there is no doubt, prays that knowledge, accompanied with sound discretion and judgment, might be imparted to him. Those who read, disjunctively, *goodness and taste*, mar the whole sentence. It is, however, necessary, in order to our arriving at the full meaning, that the latter clause should be added. He asserts that he *believed God's commandments*, in other words, that he cheerfully embraced whatever is prescribed in the law; and thus he describes himself as docile and obedient. As it was by the guidance of the Holy Spirit that he became thus inclined to obedience, he pleads that another gift may be bestowed upon him,—the gift of a sound taste and good understanding. Whence we learn, that these two things—right affection and good understanding—are indispensably necessary to the due regulation of the life. The prophet already believed God's commandments; but his veneration for the law, proceeding from a holy zeal, led him to desire conformity to it, and made him afraid, and not without cause, of inconsiderately going astray. Let us then learn, that after God has framed our hearts to the obedience of his law, we must, at the same time, ask wisdom from him by which to regulate our zeal.

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67. *Before I was brought low I went astray.* As the verb עָנָה, *anah*, sometimes signifies *to speak*, or *to testify*, some adopt this rendering, *Before I meditated upon thy statutes I went astray;* but this seems too forced. Others go still farther from the meaning, in supposing it to be, that when the prophet went astray, he had nothing to say in answer to God. I will not stop to refute these conceits, there being no ambiguity in the words. David in his own person describes either that wantonness or rebellion, common to all mankind, which is displayed in this, that we never yield obedience to God until we are compelled by his chastisements. It is indeed a monstrous thing obstinately to refuse to submit ourselves to Him; and yet experience demonstrates, that so long as he deals gently with us, we are always breaking forth into insolence. Since even a prophet of God required to have his rebellion corrected by forcible means, this kind of discipline is assuredly most needful for us. The first step in obedience being the mortifying of the flesh, to which all men are naturally disinclined, it is not surprising if God bring us to a sense of our duty by manifold afflictions. Yea, rather as the flesh is from time to time obstreperous, even when it seems to be tamed, it is no wonder to find him repeatedly subjecting us anew to the rod. This is done in different ways. He humbles some by poverty, some by shame, some by diseases, some by domestic distresses, some by hard and painful labours; and thus, according to the diversity of vices to which we are prone, he applies to each its appropriate remedy. It is now obvious how profitable a truth this confession contains. The prophet speaks of himself even as Jeremiah, (xxxi. 18,) in like manner, says of himself, that he was "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;" but still he sets before us an image of the rebellion which is natural to us all. We are very ungrateful, indeed, if this fruit which we reap from chastisements do not assuage or mitigate their bitterness. So long as we are rebellious against God, we are in a state of the deepest wretchedness: now, the only means by which He bends and tames us to obedience, is his instructing us by his chastisements. The prophet, at the same time, teaches us by his own example, that since God gives evidence

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of his willingness that we should become his disciples, by the pains he takes to subdue our hardness, we should at least endeavour to become gentle, and, laying aside all stubbornness, willingly bear the yoke which he imposes upon us.

The next verse needs no explanation, being nearly of the same import as the last verse of the former eight. He beseeches God to exercise his goodness towards him, not by causing him to increase in riches and honours, or to abound in pleasures, but by enabling him to make progress in the knowledge of the law. It is usual for almost all mankind to implore the exercise of God's goodness towards them, and to desire that he would deal bountifully with them, in the way of gratifying the diversity of the desires into which they are severally hurried by the inclinations of the flesh; but David protests that he would be completely satisfied, provided he experienced God to be liberal towards him in this one particular, which almost all men pass over with disdain.

69. *The proud have weaved*[1] *lies against me.* He declares that, notwithstanding the malignant interpretation which the wicked put upon all that he did, and their attempts, by this artifice, to turn him aside from following after and loving uprightness, the state of his mind remained unaltered. It is a severe temptation, when, although innocent, we are loaded with reproach and infamy, and are not only assailed by injurious words, but also held up to the odium of the world by wicked persons, under some specious pretence or other. We see many who otherwise are good people, and inclined to live uprightly, either become discouraged, or are greatly shaken, when they find themselves so unworthily rewarded. On this account the prophet's example is the more to be attended to, that we may not be appalled by the malignity of men; that we may not cease to nourish within us the fear of God, even when they may have succeeded in destroying our reputation in the sight of our fellow-creatures; and that we may be contented to have our piety shining at the judgment-seat of God, although it may be defaced by the calumnies of men. So long as

[1] Archbishop Secker reads, "made up." "It signifies," says he, "fastening things together."

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we depend upon the judgment of men, we will always be in a state of fluctuation, as has been already observed. Farther, let our works be never so splendid, we know that they will be of no account in the sight of God, if, in performing them, our object is to gain the favour of the world. Let us therefore learn to cast our eyes to that heavenly stage, and to despise all the malicious reports which men may spread against us. Let us leave the children of this world to enjoy their reward, since our crown is laid up for us in heaven, and not on the earth. Let us disentangle ourselves from the snares with which Satan endeavours to obstruct us, by patiently bearing infamy for a season. The verb טפל, *taphal*, which otherwise signifies *to join together*, is here, by an elegant metaphor, taken for *to weave*, or *to trim*; intimating that the enemies of the prophet not only loaded him with coarse reproaches, but also invented crimes against him, and did so with great cunning and colour of truth, that he might seem to be the blackest of characters. But though they ceased not to weave for him this web, he was enabled to break through it by his invincible constancy; and, exercising a strict control over his heart, he continued faithfully to observe the law of God. He applies to them the appellation of *proud;* and the reason of this, it may be conjectured, is, that the persons of whom he speaks were not the common people, but great men, who, inflated with confidence in their honours and riches, rose up against him with so much the more audacity. He evidently intimates that they trampled him under their feet by their proud disdain, just as if he had been a dead dog.

With this corresponds the statement in the subsequent verse, (70th,) that *their heart is fat as grease*,[1]—a vice too common among the despisers of God. Whence is it that wicked men, whom their own conscience gnaws within, vaunt themselves so insolently against the most eminent servants

[1] The fat of the human body, as physiologists inform us, is absolutely insensible; the lean membraneous parts being those only which are sensitive. Accordingly, *fatness of heart* is used, with much propriety, to express the insensibility, stupidity, or sensuality of those feelings or affections of which the heart is considered the seat.

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of God, but because a certain grossness overgrows their hearts, so that they are stupified, and even phrenzied by their own obstinacy? But wonderful and worthy of the highest praise is the magnanimity of the prophet, who found all his delight in the law of God: it is as if he declared that this was the food on which he fed, and with which he was refreshed in the highest degree; which could not have been the case had not his heart been freed, and thoroughly cleansed from all unhallowed pleasures.

71. *It has been good for me that I was afflicted.* He here confirms the sentiment which we have previously considered —that it was profitable to him to be subdued by God's chastisements, that he might more and more be brought back and softened to obedience. By these words he confesses that he was not exempt from the perverse obstinacy with which all mankind are infected; for, had it been otherwise with him, the profit of which he speaks, when he says that his docility was owing to his being brought low, would have been merely pretended; even as none of us willingly submits his neck to God, until He soften our natural hardness by the strokes of a hammer. It is good for us to taste continually the fruit which comes to us from God's corrections, that they may become sweet to us; and that, in this way, we, who are so rebellious and wayward, may suffer ourselves to be brought into subjection.

The last verse also requires no exposition, as it contains a sentiment of very frequent occurrence in this psalm, and, in itself, sufficiently plain,—That he preferred God's law to all the riches of the world, the immoderate desire of which so deplorably infatuates the great bulk of mankind. He does not compare the law of God with the riches he himself possessed; but he affirms, that it was more precious in his estimation than a vast inheritance.

73. *Thy hands have made and fashioned me: make me to understand, that I may learn thy commandments.*

74. *They who fear thee shall see me and be glad; because I have hoped in thy word.*

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ו 75. *I have known, O Jehovah! that thy judgments are justice; and thou hast humbled me in truth.*
ו 76. *I beseech thee let thy goodness be for my consolation, according to thy word to thy servant.*
ו 77. *Let thy compassions come unto me, and let me live: for thy law is my delight.*
ו 78. *Let the proud be put to shame; for they have falsely endeavoured to pervert me: I will meditate on thy precepts.*
ו 79. *Let such as fear thee turn unto me, and those who have known thy testimonies.*
ו 80. *Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I may not be put to shame.*

73. *Thy hands have made and fashioned me.* The avowal of the prophet, that he had been created by the hand of God, greatly contributed to inspire him with the hope of obtaining the favour which he supplicates. As we are the creatures and the workmanship of God, and as he has not only bestowed upon us vital motion, in common with the lower animals, but has, in addition thereto, given us the light of understanding and reason,—this encourages us to pray that he would direct us to the obedience of his law. And yet the prophet does not call upon God, as if He were under any obligations to him; but, knowing that God never forsakes the work which he has begun, he simply asks for new grace, by which God may carry on to perfection what he has commenced. We have need of the assistance of the *law*, since all that is sound in our understandings is corrupted; so that we cannot perceive what is right, unless we are taught from some other source. But our blindness and stupidity are still more strikingly manifest, from the fact that teaching will avail us nothing, until our souls are renewed by Divine grace. What I have previously said must be borne in mind, That whenever the prophet prays for understanding being imparted to him, in order to his learning the Divine commandments, he condemns both himself and all mankind as in a state of blindness; for which the only remedy is the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

74. *They who fear thee shall see me and be glad.* This verse

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is either connected with the preceding, or it includes other benefits of God, besides the blessing mentioned in that verse. Whether the Psalmist adverts only to one particular species of blessing, or speaks generally, he by these words highly extols the benefits with which God had honoured him, that all genuine saints in common might experience joy on that account. He does not mean to say that this joy proceeds solely from the trust which he reposed in God, but that it also proceeds from this,—that, having been preserved by him in a remarkable way, and loaded with many benefits, his hope had received an ample reward. As God invites all his servants in common to trust in him, it follows, that, whenever he exhibits a token of his grace towards any one of them, he testifies to all that he is faithful to his promises, and that they have no reason to be afraid of his disappointing those who trust in him.

75. *I have known, O Jehovah! that thy judgments are justice.* By *judgments*, in this psalm, we are to understand the precepts of the law; but as the prophet immediately adds, that he was justly chastised, he seems to use the word in this verse, for the punishments by which God stirs up men to repentance. These two words, צדק, *tsedek*, *justice*, in the first clause, and אמונה, *emunah*, *truth*, in the last, have here nearly the same signification. In the first clause, the prophet confesses in general that God so regulates his judgments, as to shut the mouths of the ungodly, should any of them complain of his cruelty or rigour; and that such equity shines forth in them, as to extort from us the confession that nothing is better for men than in this way to be called back to the consideration of themselves. He next exhibits an example of this in his own person. Even hypocrites sometimes yield God the praise of justice when he chastises others, and they never condemn his severity, so long as they themselves are spared. But it is the property of true piety to be less austere and rigid censors of the faults of others than of our own. The *knowledge* of which the prophet speaks, is a sure evidence of his having made a strict and earnest examination of himself; for, had he not well weighed his own guilt, he could not by assured

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experience have learned the righteousness of God in his afflictions. If it is considered preferable to take the word *judgments* in its usual acceptation, the meaning of the text will be: Lord, I know that thy law is holy and just, and severely as thou hast afflicted me, I still retain the persuasion of this truth; for even in my afflictions I discern the righteousness, which corresponds with the character of thy word.

76. *I beseech thee let thy goodness be for my consolation.* Although he has acknowledged that he had been justly humbled, yet he desires that his sorrow may be alleviated by some consolation. He implores God's mercy, as what was essentially necessary to relieve and cure his miseries. He thus shows that nothing can remove sorrow from the faithful, until they feel that God is reconciled to them. In the Word in which God offers his mercy, there is to be found no small comfort for healing all the grief to which men are liable. But the Psalmist is now speaking of *actual* mercy, if I may use that term, when God by the very deed declares the favour which he has promised. Confiding in the Divine promise, he already cherished in his heart a joy, proceeding from the hope of receiving the communications of Divine grace. But as all our hope would end in mere disappointment, did not God at length appear as our deliverer, he requests the performance of that which God had promised him. Lord, as if he had said, since thou hast graciously promised to be ready to succour me, be pleased to make good thy word in effect. The observation which I have previously made ought to be remembered, That it is not in vain to remind God of his promise. It would be presumption for men to come into His presence, did he not, of his own mere good pleasure, open up the way for them. When the Psalmist says, *to thy servant*, he does not claim God's mercy exclusively to himself, as if it had been promised to him alone by some special oracle; but he applies to himself what God has promised to the whole Church, which it is the peculiar province of faith to do; for unless I believe that I am one of those to whom God addresses himself in his word, so that his promises belong to me in common with others, I will never have the confidence to call upon him.

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77. *Let thy compassions come unto me.* In this verse, the Psalmist repeats and confirms almost the same request as in the preceding verse, although in phraseology somewhat different. As he had just now said, that his sorrow could not be removed, nor his joy restored, in any other way than by God's mercy being exercised towards him; so now he affirms that he cannot live without being reconciled to God. He thus distinguishes himself from worldly men, who are very little affected with a concern about having God reconciled to them; or, rather, who do not cease securely to enjoy themselves, although God is angry with them. He distinctly affirms, that, until he know that God is reconciled to him, he is a dead man even while living; but that, on the other hand, whenever God shall cause his mercy to shine upon him, he will be restored from death to life. By the way, he intimates that he was deprived for a time of the tokens of God's fatherly favour; for it would have been needless for him to have wished that *it might come to him*, had it not been removed from him. As an argument for obtaining what he supplicates, he asserts that *the law of God was his delight;* nor could he otherwise hope that God would be merciful to him. Besides, no man truly feels what virtue is in the Divine favour, but he who, placing his chief happiness in that alone, is convinced that all who dissever themselves from God are miserable and accursed; a truth which the prophet had learned from the law.

78. *Let the proud be put to shame.* We have already often had occasion to remark, that, in the Hebrew language, the future tense is frequently used in the sense of the optative mood, as here,—*They shall be put to shame*, for, *Let them be put to shame.* Still it would not be unsuitable to explain the meaning thus: As the proud have dealt mischievously with me, and molested me without a cause, the Lord will give them their reward. But as almost all interpreters are agreed that this is a prayer, in the translation of the verse I am unwilling to depart from the generally received explanation, especially as the language is expressly addressed to God himself. It is important to attend to the reason why the Psalmist hopes

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that God will be an enemy to *his* enemies; namely, because they wickedly and maliciously assaulted him. The word שֶׁקֶר, *sheker*, which I have rendered *falsely*, is by some translated, *without a cause;* but they seem only to hit upon the one half of the prophet's meaning; for this word, in my opinion, is to be referred to the stratagems and artifices by which the wicked endeavoured to destroy David. Whence we gather, that whenever we are wrongfully persecuted by wicked men, we are invited to have recourse directly to God for protection. At the same time, we are taught that we have no reason to be abashed at their insolence; for, whatever power they may arrogate to themselves, He will beat down their loftiness, and lay it low, to their shame; so that, being confounded, they will serve as an example, to teach others that nothing is more ridiculous than to sing the song of triumph before the victory is gained. The verb אָשִׂיחַ, *asiach*, in the second clause of the verse, may be rendered, *I will speak of*, as well as *I will meditate upon;* implying, that, when he had obtained the victory, he would proclaim the goodness of God, which he had experienced. *To speak of God's statutes*, is equivalent to declaring out of the law, how faithfully he guards his saints, how securely he delivers them, and how righteously he avenges their wrongs.

79. *Let such as fear thee turn unto me.* In this verse, which is connected with the preceding, the Psalmist affirms, that the deliverance which he obtained would afford common instruction to all the godly. My condition, as if he had said, may, for a time, have disheartened the righteous, as well as increased the insolence of my enemies; but now, taking courage, they will turn their eyes to this joyful spectacle. Moreover, let us learn from the two marks, by which he distinguishes true believers, what is the nature of genuine godliness. He puts *the fear*, or *the reverence of God*, in the first place; but he immediately joins to it *the knowledge of Divine truth*, to teach us that these two things are inseparably connected. The superstitious, indeed, exhibit a fear of God of a certain kind, but it is a mere show, which quickly evanishes. Be-

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sides, they weary themselves in their own inventions to no purpose; for God will take no account of any other services, but those which are performed in obedience to his commandments. True religion, then, and the worship of God, have their origin in faith—in the faith of what he has enjoined; so that no person can serve God aright, but he who has been taught in His school.

80. *Let my heart be sound in thy statutes.* Having, a little before, desired to be endued with a sound understanding, he now prays, in a similar manner, for sincere affection of heart. The understanding and affections, as is well known, are the two principal faculties of the human soul, both of which he clearly shows to be depraved and perverse, when he requests that his understanding may be illuminated, and, at the same time, that his heart may be framed to the obedience of the law. This plainly refutes all that the Papists babble about free will. The prophet not only here prays that God would help him, because his will was weak; but he testifies, without qualification, that uprightness of heart is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are, moreover, taught by these words, in what the true keeping of the law consists. A great part of mankind, after having carelessly framed their life according to the Divine law, by outward obedience, think that they want nothing. But the Holy Spirit here declares that no service is acceptable to God, except that which proceeds from integrity of heart. As to the word תמים, *thamim*, rendered *sound*, we have elsewhere said, that *a sound heart* is set in opposition to a double or deceitful heart. It is as if the prophet had said, that those who are without dissimulation, and who offer to God a pure heart, yield themselves truly to Him. When it is added, *that I may not be put to shame*, it is intimated, that such shall be the undoubted issue as to all the proud, who, disdaining the grace of God, lean upon their own strength; and as to all hypocrites, who, for a time, parade themselves in gay colours. The amount, then, is, that unless God govern us by his Spirit, and keep us in the performance of our duty, so that our hearts may be sound in his statutes,

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although our shame may be hidden for a time, yea, although all men should praise us, and hold us in admiration, yet we cannot avoid falling, at length, into dishonour and ignominy.

כ 81. *My soul hath fainted for thy salvation: I hope in thy word.*
כ 82. *My eyes have waxed dim in looking for thy promise, and I say, When wilt thou comfort me?*
כ 83. *For I have been as a bottle in the smoke; and yet I have not forgotten thy statutes.*
כ 84. *How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on my persecutors?*
כ 85. *The proud have digged pits for me, which thing is not according to thy law.*
כ 86. *All thy commandments are truth: they persecute me deceitfully; therefore help thou me.*
כ 87. *They have almost consumed me upon the earth; yet I have not forsaken thy statutes.*
כ 88. *Quicken me according to thy goodness; and I will keep the testimony of thy mouth.*

81. *My soul hath fainted for thy salvation.* The Psalmist intimates that, although worn out with continual grief, and perceiving no issue to his calamities, yet trouble and weariness had not produced such a discouraging effect upon his mind, as to prevent him from always reposing with confidence in God. To bring out the meaning the more distinctly, we must begin at the second clause, which is obviously added by way of exposition. There he affirms that he trusts in God; and this is the foundation of all. But, intending to express the invincible constancy of his trust, he tells us that he patiently endured all the distresses, under which others succumb. We see some embracing with great eagerness the promises of God; but their ardour, within a short time, evanishes; or, at least, is quenched by adversity. It was far otherwise with David. The verb כָּלָה, *kalah*, which signifies to *faint*, or to *be consumed*, seems, indeed, at first sight, to convey a different meaning. But the prophet, in this passage, as in other places, by *fainting* means that *patience*, which those who are deprived of all strength, and who seem to be already

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dead, continue to cherish, and which inspires their hearts with secret groanings, and such as cannot be uttered. This fainting, then, is opposed to the delicacy of those who cannot suffer a long delay.

82. *My eyes have waxed dim in looking for thy word.* This verse is very similar to the preceding,—transferring to the eyes what had been said before concerning the soul. The only difference is, that, instead of *longing after salvation* or *help*, the expression, *longing after God's word* or *promise*, is here used; for *salvation* is an act, as it is termed; that is to say, it consists in effect, whereas *a promise* keeps us suspended in expectation. God may not, all at once, openly perform what he has promised; and, in this case, it being only in his word that he promises us help, there is no other way by which we can hope for help, than by our reposing on his word. As, then, the word precedes, in order, the help which God affords, or, rather, as it is the manner in which it is represented to our view, the prophet, when sighing after salvation, very properly declares that he kept his eyes fixed on the Divine word, until his sight failed him. Here we have presented to us the wonderful and incredible power of patience, under the infirmity of the flesh, when, being faint and deprived of all vigour, we have recourse to God for help, even while it is hidden from us. In short, the prophet, to prevent it from being supposed that he was too effeminate and faint-hearted, intimates that his fainting was not without cause. In asking God, *When wilt thou comfort me?* he shows, with sufficient plainness, that he was for a long time, as it were, cast off and forsaken.

83. *For I have been as a bottle in the smoke.*[1] The particle

[1] Bottles, among the Jews and other nations of the East, were made of goats' or kids' skins, as is the custom among the Eastern nations at this day. When the animal was killed, they cut off its feet and head, and drew it, in that manner, out of the skin without opening the belly. They afterwards sewed up the places where the legs were cut off, and the tail, and when it was filled, they tied it about the neck. In these bottles, not only water, milk, and other liquids were put, but every thing intended to be carried to a distance, whether dry or liquid. To these goat-skin vessels a reference is here undoubtedly made. The peasantry

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כִּי, *ki*, translated *for*, might also, not improperly, be resolved into the adverb of time, *when;* so that we might read the verse in one connected sentence, thus: *When I was like a dried bottle, I, nevertheless, did not forget thy law.* The obvious design of the Psalmist is to teach us, that, although he had been proved by severe trials, and wounded to the quick, he yet had not been withdrawn from the fear of God. In comparing himself to a *bottle* or *bladder*, he intimates that he was, as it were, parched by the continual heat of adversities. Whence we learn, that that sorrow must have been intense which reduced him to such a state of wretchedness and emaciation, that like a shrivelled bottle he was almost dried up. It, however, appears that he intends to point out, not only the severity of his affliction, but also its lingering nature—that he was tormented, as it were, at a slow fire;[1] even as the smoke which proceeds from heat dries bladders by slow degrees. The prophet experienced a long series of griefs, which might have consumed him a hundred times, and that,

of Asia are in the habit of suspending them from the roof, or hanging them against the walls of their tents or humble dwellings: here they soon become quite black with smoke; for, as in their dwellings there are seldom any chimneys, and the smoke can only escape through an aperture in the roof, or by the door, whenever a fire is lighted the apartment is instantly filled with dense smoke. Accordingly, some suppose that the allusion here chiefly is to the blackness which a bottle contracts by hanging in the smoke; and the translators of our English Bible, by referring in the margin to Job xxx. 30, as parallel to this, seem to have supposed that the Psalmist refers to the *blackness* his face contracted by sorrow. "But," says Harmer, "this can hardly be supposed to be the whole of his thought. In such a case, would he not rather have spoken of the *blackness of a pot*, as it is supposed the prophet Joel does, (ii. 6,) rather than to that of a *leather bottle?*"—*Harmer's Observations*, vol. i. p. 218. When such bottles are suspended in the smoky tent of an Arab, if they do not contain liquids, or are not quite filled by the solids which they hold, they become dry, shrunk, and shrivelled; and to this, as well as to their blackness, the Psalmist may allude. Long-continued bodily affliction and mental trouble produce a similar change on the human frame, destroying its beauty and strength by drying up the natural moisture. It has also been thought that there is a contrast between such mean bottles and the rich vessels of gold and silver which were used in the palaces of kings. "My appearance in the state of my exile is as different from what it was when I dwelt at court, as are the gold and silver vessels of a palace from the smoky skin bottles of a poor Arab's tent, where I am now compelled to reside."—*Ibid.* and *Paxton's Illustrations*, vol. ii. pp. 409, 410.

[1] "Comme à petit feu."—*Fr.*

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by their protracted and lingering nature, had he not been sustained by the word of God. In short, it is a genuine evidence of true godliness, when, although plunged into the deepest afflictions, we yet cease not to submit ourselves to God.

84. *How many are the days of thy servant? &c.* Some read these two clauses apart, as if the first were a general complaint of the brevity of human life, such as is to be met with in other psalms, and more frequently in the book of Job; and next, in their opinion, there follows a special prayer of the Psalmist, that God would take vengeance upon his enemies. But I rather prefer joining the two clauses together, and limit both to David's afflictions; as if it had been said, Lord, how long hast thou determined to abandon thy servant to the will of the ungodly? when wilt thou set thyself in opposition to their cruelty and outrage, in order to take vengeance upon them? The Scriptures often use the word *days* in this sense; as, for example, "the days of Egypt," Ezek. xxx. 9; "the days of Babylon," and "the days of Jerusalem," Ps. cxxxvii. 7; a word which, in other places, is called "the day of visitation," Isa. x. 3. By the use of the plural number, is denoted a certain determinate portion of time, which, in other places, is compared to the "days of an hireling," Job xiv. 6; Isa. xvi. 14. The Psalmist does not, then, bewail in general the transitory life of man, but he complains that the time of his state of warfare in this world had been too long protracted; and, therefore, he naturally desires that it might be brought to a termination. In expostulating with God about his trouble, he does not do so obstinately, or with a murmuring spirit; but still, in asking how long it will be necessary for him to suffer, he humbly prays that God would not delay to succour him. As to the point of his stirring him up by prayer to execute vengeance, we have elsewhere seen in what sense it was lawful for him to make such a request; namely, because the vengeance which he desired to see was such as is properly suitable to God. It is certain that he had divested himself of all the corrupt affections of the flesh, that he might, with a pure and undisturbed zeal, desire God's judgment. He, however, in this passage, only wishes in

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general to be delivered by the hand of God from the wrongs which were inflicted upon him, without adjudging to perdition his adversaries; for he was quite contented, provided God appeared to defend him.

85. *The proud*[1] *have digged pits for me.* He complains that he had been circumvented by the frauds and artifices of his enemies; as if he had said, They have not only endeavoured to injure me by open force and the violence of the sword, but have also maliciously sought to destroy me by snares and secret arts. The additional clause, *which thing is not according to thy Law*, is introduced as an argument, to excite God to exercise his mercy; for he is the more inclined to succour his servants, when he sees that the attempts made upon their welfare involve the violation of his own Law. At the same time, the Psalmist furnishes a proof of his own innocence, intimating that he had deserved no such treatment at their hands, and that whatever they practised, he, notwithstanding, patiently kept himself under restraint; not attempting any thing which he knew to be contrary to the Divine Law.

86. *All thy commandments are truth.* In this verse he again confirms the statement, That, in whatever ways he was afflicted, his mind had not been distracted by various devices, because, trusting in the word of God, he never doubted of his assistance. In the first place, he tells us, that the consideration, by which he was armed for repelling all assaults, was this, That the faithful, under the conduct of God, engage in a prosperous warfare, the salvation which they hope for from his word being absolutely certain. For this reason he

[1] "זדים, *the proud.* The proud here, as well as in many other parts of Scripture, stands for *lawless, wicked men.* So the rendering of the LXX. is παράνομοι; Vulg. *iniqui.* The relative, אשר, is referred to שיחות, *pits*, by many persons, as Amyraldus, who thus paraphrases the latter part of the verse: 'At retia illa, cum lege tua directe pugnant.' Others make זדים the antecedent, of whom they consider the second hemistich as descriptive. *The proud, who have not acted according to thy Law, have dug pits for me.* The sense is more obvious, according to this latter exposition; for one does not see the force of the phrase, 'digging pits,' which *are not according* to God's Law, as if pits might be dug which *are according* to it."—*Phillips.*

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declares, that *the commandments of God are true;* by which encomium he teaches us, that those who rely upon the word of God are out of all danger; and he lays down this truth, that such a support may always sustain our courage. In the second place, he complains of the treachery of his enemies, as he declared before. Here the word שֶׁקֶר, *sheker*, is repeated, by which he means, that they had no regard to equity. From this consideration also he was led to entertain the hope of deliverance; for it is the peculiar office of God to succour the poor and afflicted who are wrongfully oppressed.

87. *They have almost consumed me upon the earth.* He repeats, in somewhat different words, what he had spoken a little before, that, although he had been sorely tempted, he had nevertheless kept his footing, because he had not given up with true religion. A single declaration of this fact would have been enough for those who are perfect; but if we call to mind our own weakness, we will readily confess that it was not unworthy of being repeatedly stated. We not only forget the law of God when we are shaken by extreme conflicts, but the greater part lose their courage even before they engage in the conflict. On which account this wonderful strength of the prophet is worthy of more special notice, who, although almost reduced to death, yet never ceased to revive his courage by continual meditation on the law. Nor is it in vain that he adds, that it was *upon the earth* that his enemies had almost consumed him, conveying the idea, that, when the fears of death presented themselves to him on all sides in this world, he elevated his mind above the world. If faith reach to heaven, it will be an easy matter to emerge from despair.

88. *Quicken me according to thy goodness.* This verse contains nothing new. In the beginning of it David represents his life as depending on God's mercy, not only because he was conscious of human frailty, but because he saw himself daily exposed to death in multiplied forms, or rather because he was convinced, that were God's power withdrawn from him, he would be laid prostrate as if he were dead. He next

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promises, that when he shall be again restored to life he will not be ungrateful, but will duly acknowledge this as a blessing from God, and that not only with the tongue, but also in his whole life. As the various instances in which God succours us and delivers us from dangers are so many new lives, it is reasonable that we should dedicate to his service whatever additional time is allotted to us in this world. When the law is called *the testimony of God's mouth*, by this eulogium its authority is very plainly asserted.

ל 89. *Thy word, O Jehovah! endureth for ever in heaven.*
ל 90. *Thy truth is from generation to generation: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*
ל 91. *By thy judgments they continue to this day; for all are thy servants.*
ל 92. *Had not thy law been my delight, I had then perished in my affliction.*
ל 93. *I will never forget thy statutes, for thou hast quickened me in them.*
ל 94. *I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy statutes.*
ל 95. *The wicked wait for me to destroy me: but I consider thy testimonies.*
ל 96. *In all perfection I have seen the end: thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

89. *Thy word, O Jehovah! endureth for ever.* Many explain this verse as if David adduced the stability of the heavens as a proof of God's truth. According to them the meaning is, that God is proved to be true, because the heavens continually remain in the same state.[1] Others offer

[1] This is the explanation given by Walford. His translation is:—

"O Jehovah! for ever
Is thy word established in the heavens."

Upon which he observes: "The design of these words is by no means obvious, and the interpreters vary greatly in their explications. I have not met with any explanation that is altogether satisfactory, and shall therefore give what appears to me to be the true meaning. The design, in general, of the Psalmist is, to celebrate the immutability of the word of God: whatever He speaks is sure. To illustrate this position, he refers to the creation of the heavens and of the earth; they were alike formed by the word of God,—'He spake, and it was done.' By virtue

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a still more forced interpretation, That God's truth is more sure than the state of the heavens. But it appears to me that the prophet intended to convey a very different idea. As we see nothing constant or of long continuance upon earth, he elevates our minds to heaven, that they may fix their anchor there. David, no doubt, might have said, as he has done in many other places, that the whole order of the world bears testimony to the stedfastness of God's word—that word which is most true. But as there is reason to fear that the minds of the godly would hang in uncertainty if they rested the proof of God's truth upon the state of the world, in which such manifold disorders prevail; by placing God's truth in the heavens, he allots to it a habitation subject to no changes. That no person then may estimate God's word from the various vicissitudes which meet his eye in this world, heaven is tacitly set in opposition to the earth. Our salvation, as if it had been said, being shut up in God's word, is not subject to change, as all earthly things are, but is anchored in a safe and peaceful haven. The same truth the Prophet Isaiah teaches in somewhat different words: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field," (Isa. xl. 6.) He means, according to the Apostle Peter's exposition, (1 Peter i. 24,) that the certainty of salvation is to be sought in the word, and, therefore, that they do wrong who settle their minds upon the world; for the stedfastness of God's word far transcends the stability of the world.

90. *Thy truth is from generation to generation.* In this verse the Psalmist repeats and confirms the same sentiment. He expressly teaches, that although the faithful live for a short time as strangers upon earth, and soon pass away, yet their life is not perishable, since they are begotten again of an incorruptible seed. He, however, proceeds still farther.

of that word these vast productions abide through all ages, so that the word of God is established and displayed in heaven and upon earth. As the same word uttered all the precepts and institutions of the law, and all the promises of the covenant of mercy, the unchangeableness of these precepts and promises is verified and manifested by the perpetual conservation of all these instances of physical power and energy."

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He had before enjoined us to pierce by faith into heaven, because we will find nothing in the world on which we can assuredly rest; and now he again teaches us, by experience, that though the world is subject to revolutions, yet in it bright and signal testimonies to the truth of God shine forth, so that the stedfastness of his word is not exclusively confined to heaven, but comes down even to us who dwell upon the earth. For this reason, it is added, that the earth continues stedfast, even as it was established by God at the beginning. Lord, as if it had been said, even in the earth we see thy truth reflected as it were in a mirror; for though it is suspended in the midst of the sea, yet it continues to remain in the same state. These two things, then, are quite consistent; first, that the stedfastness of God's word is not to be judged of according to the condition of the world, which is always fluctuating, and fades away as a shadow; and, secondly, that yet men are ungrateful if they do not acknowledge the constancy which in many respects marks the framework of the world; for the earth, which otherwise could not occupy the position it does for a single moment, abides notwithstanding stedfast, because God's word is the foundation on which it rests. Farther, no person has any ground for objecting, that it is a hard thing to go beyond this world in quest of the evidences of God's truth, since, in that case, it would be too remote from the apprehension of men. The prophet meets the objection by affirming, that although it dwells in heaven, yet we may see at our very feet conspicuous proofs of it, which may gradually advance us to as perfect knowledge of it as our limited capacity will permit. Thus the prophet, on the one hand, exhorts us to rise above the whole world by faith, so that the word of God may be found by experience to be adequate, as it really is adequate, to sustain our faith; and, on the other hand, he warns us that we have no excuse, if, by the very sight of the earth, we do not discover the truth of God, since legible traces of it are to be found at our feet. In the first clause, men are called back from the vanity of their own understanding; and, in the other, their weakness is relieved, that they may have a foretaste upon earth of what is to be found more fully in heaven.

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91. *By thy judgments they continue to this day.* The word היום, *hayom*, which, following other interpreters, I have translated *to this day*, might not improperly be rendered *daily*, or *every day*. In that case, however, the sense would be substantially the same; for the prophet means, that the whole order of nature depends solely upon the commandment or decree of God. In using the term *judgments*, he makes an allusion to the law, intimating, that the same regard to rectitude which is exhibited in the law is brightly displayed in every part of God's procedure. From this it follows, that men are very perverse, when, by their unbelief, they do what they can to shake and impair the faithfulness of God, upon which all creatures repose; and, moreover, when by their rebellion they impeach his righteousness, and deny the authority of his commands, upon which the stability of the whole world depends. It is a harsh manner of expression to say, that *all the elements are God's servants;* but it expresses more than if it had been said, that all things are ready to yield obedience to him. How can we account for it, that the air, which is so thin, does not consume itself by blowing incessantly? How can we account for it, that the waters do not waste away by flowing, but on the principle that these elements obey the secret command of God? By faith, it is true, we perceive that the continued existence of the world is owing to the fiat of God; but all who have the smallest pretensions to understanding are led to the same conclusion, from the manifest and undoubted proofs of this truth, which every where meet their eye. Let it then be thoroughly impressed upon our minds, that all things are so governed and maintained by the secret operation of God, as that their continuing in the same state is owing to their obeying his commandment or word. We must always remember the point which the prophet aims at; which is, that God's faithfulness, which shines forth in his external works, may gradually conduct us higher, until we attain such a persuasion of the truth of heavenly doctrine as is entirely free from doubt.

92. *Had not thy law been my delight.* The prophet continues to prosecute almost the same theme; affirming, that he

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would have been undone, had he not in his calamities sought consolation from the law of God. The adverb אָז, *az*, signifies *then;* but as it is sometimes used for *a long time*, it is equivalent here to *long ago;* unless some may prefer to consider it as a significant and emphatic pointing to the thing, as if he were still in the state which he describes. He confirms from his own experience what he had previously said, to make it manifest that he did not speak of things with which he was unacquainted, but that he asserts what he had really experienced,—namely, that there is no other solace, and no other remedy for adversity, but our reposing upon the word of God, and our embracing the grace and the assurance of our salvation which are offered in it. He here unquestionably commends the very same word, which he had but now said dwelt in heaven. Though it resound on earth, enter into our ears, and settle in our hearts, yet it still retains its celestial nature; for it descends to us in such a manner, as that it is not subject to the changes of the world. The prophet declares that he was grievously oppressed by a weight of afflictions enough to overwhelm him; but that the consolation which he derived from the Divine Law, in such desperate circumstances, was as life to him.

93. *I will never forget thy statutes.* This verse contains a thanksgiving. As the law of the Lord had preserved him, he engages that he will never forget it. Yet he, at the same time, admonishes himself and others how necessary it is to cherish in the heart the remembrance of the Divine Law; for though we have found from experience its life-giving power, yet we easily allow it to pass from our memories, and on this account God afterwards justly punishes us, by leaving us for a long time to languish in our sadness.

94. *I am thine, save me.* In the first place, he takes encouragement to pray from the consideration, that he is one of God's own stamp and coinage, as we speak. In the second place, he proves that he is God's from the fact of his keeping his commandments. This ought not, however, to be understood as if he boasted of any merit which he possessed; as,

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in dealing with men, it is customary to adduce something meritorious which we have done as an argument for obtaining what we desire:—I have always loved and esteemed you, I have always studied to promote your honour and advantage; my service has always been ready at your command. But David rather brings forward the unmerited grace of God, and that alone; for no man, by any efforts of his own, acquires the high honour of being under the protection of God—an honour which proceeds solely from his free adoption. The blessing which God had conferred upon him is therefore here adduced as an argument why he should not forsake the work which he had commenced. When he affirms, that he was earnestly intent upon the Divine commandments, that also depended upon the Divine calling; for he did not begin to apply his mind to God's commandments before he was called and received into his household. As he desires, in this verse, that the Lord would save him, so, in the next verse, he expresses the need he had of being saved, saying, *that the wicked sought for him to destroy him;* by which he, at the same time, declares the constancy of his godliness, inasmuch as he then set his mind upon the law of God—a point worthy of special notice. Those who, at other times, would be forward and willing to follow God, know not to what side to turn themselves when they are assailed by the wicked, and, in that case, are very prone to follow unhallowed counsel. It is therefore a great virtue to do God the honour of resting contented with his promises alone, when the wicked conspire for our destruction, and when, to all human appearance, our life is in jeopardy. *To consider God's testimonies* is, in this place, equivalent to applying our minds to the word of God, which sustains us against all assaults, effectually allays all fears, and restrains us from following any perverse counsels.

96. *In all perfection I have seen the end.*[1] The prophet

[1] "The literal translation is, *to the whole of perfection I perceive a limit.* The Hebrew word, however, which is rendered by *perfection*, occurs only in this place. It seems clearly to have for its root a verb signifying *to complete, to finish:* the meaning is, 'to every created thing, however perfect, I see a boundary;' that is, it is limited as to its capability, as well as to its duration."—*Cresswell.*

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again, using other words, commends the same truth which he had taught in the first verse of this part—that the word of God is not subject to change, because it is elevated far above the perishable elements of this world. He here asserts, that there is nothing under heaven so perfect and stable, or so complete, in all respects, as not to have an end; and that the Divine word alone possesses such amplitude as to surpass all bounds and limits. Since the verb כלה, *kalah*, signifies *to consume and finish*, as well as *to make perfect*, some take the noun תכלה, *tichelah*, for *measure* or *end*. But it is necessary to translate it *perfection*, that the comparison may be the more apparent, and the better to amplify the faithfulness of the Divine word; the idea which the prophet intended to convey being, that, after he had considered all things, especially those which are distinguished by the greatest perfection, he found that they were nothing when compared with God's word, inasmuch as all other things will soon come to an end, whereas the word of God stands ever firm in its own eternity.[1] Whence it follows, that we have no ground for apprehending that it will forsake us in the midst of our course. It is termed *broad*, to denote that, though a man may mount above the heavens, or descend into the lowest depths, or traverse the whole space from the right to the left hand, yet he will not reach farther than the truth of God conducts us. It remains that our minds should embrace this vast extent; and such will be the case when they shall have ceased to enclose and shut themselves up within the narrow limits of this world.

מ 97. *O how have I loved thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

מ 98. *Thou hast made me wiser than my adversaries by thy commandments: for they are ever with me.*

מ 99. *Thou hast made me to know more than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation.*

[1] "All human things, however full, perfect, and admirable, are necessarily deficient and mutable; but the law of God, like the nature of him from whom it proceeds, endureth for ever, and is in all respects complete and unalterable. We are to understand by the law here, the whole revealed will of God, comprehensive of promise as well as precept."—*Walford.*

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ם 100. *I excelled the aged in understanding; for I have kept thy statutes.*

ם 101. *I have restrained my feet from every evil path, that I may keep thy word.*

ם 102. *I have not declined from thy judgments; for thou hast taught me.*

ם 103. *O how sweet have been thy words to my palate! sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

ם 104. *By thy statutes I have acquired understanding; therefore I have hated every false way.*

97. *O how have I loved thy law!* Not contented with a simple affirmation, the prophet exclaims, by way of interrogation, that he was inflamed with incredible love to the law of God; and, in proof of this, he adds, that he was continually engaged in meditating upon it. If any person boasts that he loves the Divine Law, and yet neglects the study of it, and applies his mind to other things, he betrays the grossest hypocrisy; for the love of the law, and especially such an ardent love of it as the prophet here expresses, always produces continual meditation upon it. And, assuredly, unless God's law inflame and ravish our hearts with the love of it, many allurements will quickly steal upon us, and lead us away to vanity. The prophet, then, here commends such a love of the law, as, possessing all our senses, effectually excludes all the deceits and corruptions to which we are otherwise too much inclined.

98. *Thou hast made me wiser than my adversaries.* He here declares, that he was more learned than his adversaries, his instructors, and the aged, because he was a scholar of God's law. It is in a different sense that he describes himself as endued with understanding above his adversaries, from that in which he describes himself as wiser than his teachers. He surpassed his enemies, because their cunning and artifices availed them nothing when they employed these to the utmost to effect his destruction. The malice of the wicked is always goading them to do mischief; and as they are often artful and deceitful, we are afraid lest our simplicity should be imposed upon by their deceits, unless we use the same

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crafts and underhand dealings which they practise. Accordingly, the prophet glories, that he found in God's law enough to enable him to escape all their snares. When he claims the credit of being superior in knowledge to his instructors, he does not mean to deny that they also had learned from the word of God what was useful to be known. But he gives God thanks for enabling him to surpass, in proficiency, those from whom he had learned the first elements of knowledge.[1] Nor is it any new thing for the scholar to excel his master, according as God distributes to each man the measure of understanding. The faithful, it is true, are instructed by the pains and labour of men, but it is in such a way, as that God is still to be regarded as enlightening them. And it is owing to this that the scholar surpasses the master; for God means to show, as it were, with the finger, that he uses the service of men in such a way as that he himself continues still the chief teacher. Let us therefore learn to commit ourselves to his tuition, that we may glory with David, that by his guidance we have proceeded farther than man's instruction could lead us. He adds the same thing respecting *the aged*, for the more abundant confirmation of his statement. Age is of great avail in polishing, by long experience and practice, men who, by nature, are dull and rude. Now the prophet asserts, that he had acquired, by the Divine Law, more discretion than belongs to aged men.[2] In short, he means to affirm, that whoever yields himself with docility to God, keeps his thoughts in subjection to his word, and exercises himself diligently in meditating upon the Law, will thence derive wisdom sufficient for enabling him to consult his own safety in opposition to the stratagems of his enemies, to exercise circumspection requisite for escaping

[1] "As he had entered into the spiritual nature of the law of God, and saw into the exceeding breadth of the commandment, he soon became wiser than any of the *priests*, or even *prophets* who instructed him."—*Dr Adam Clarke.*

[2] "*I understand more than the ancients.* God had revealed to him more of that *hidden* wisdom, which was in his law, than he had done to any of his predecessors. And this was most literally true of David, who spoke more fully about Christ than any who had gone before him; or, indeed, followed after him. His compositions are, I had almost said, a *sublime gospel.*"—*Ibid.*

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their deceits; and, finally, to match with the most eminent masters through the whole course of his life. David, however, does not adduce his wisdom, that he may boast of it before the world; but, by his own example, he warns us, that nothing is better for us than to learn at God's mouth, since those only are perfectly wise who are taught in his school. At the same time, sobriety is here enjoined upon the faithful, that they may not seek for wisdom elsewhere than from God's word, and that ambition or curiosity may not incite them to vain boasting. In short, all are here recommended to behave themselves with modesty and humility, that no man may claim to himself such knowledge as elevates him above the Divine Law; but that all men, however intelligent, may willingly yield themselves to the lessons of heavenly wisdom revealed in the Divine Word. When he says, that *he kept God's statutes*, he teaches us what kind of meditation it is of which we have spoken, to let us know that he did not coldly philosophise upon God's precepts, but devoted himself to them with earnest affection.

101. *I have restrained my feet from every evil path.* He intimates that he proclaimed war against every vice, that he might wholly devote himself to the service of God. From this we learn the profitable lesson, that in order to our keeping God's Law, we must, from the commencement, beware lest our feet should step aside into crooked by-paths; for with a nature so corrupted as ours is, amidst so many allurements, and with minds so fickle, we are in the greatest danger of being led astray; yea, it is a rare miracle if any man hold on in his life in a right course, without turning aside in one direction or another. The faithful, therefore, have need to exercise the greatest circumspection, in order to keep their feet from going astray.

In the next verse, David commends his own constancy in observing the Law. He declares that ever since he had learned from God the right manner of living, he had pursued the right course. As the way is so slippery, and our feet so feeble, and our whole disposition so prone to go astray after innumerable errors, no small exertions

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are requisite on our part, in order to avoid declining from God's judgments. But we must attend to the manner of teaching to which the Psalmist refers; for though all, without exception, to whom God's word is preached, are taught, yet scarce one in ten so much as tastes it; yea, scarce one in a hundred profits to the extent of being enabled, thereby, to proceed in a right course to the end. A peculiar manner of teaching is, therefore, here pointed out—that which consists in God's drawing his chosen people to himself. I have been brought, as if the Psalmist had said, into the way of salvation, and preserved in it by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit.

103. *O how sweet have been thy words to my palate!* He again repeats what he had previously stated in different words, that he was so powerfully attracted by the sweetness of the Divine Law, as to have no desire after any other delight. It is possible that a man may be affected with reverence towards the Law of God; but no one will cheerfully follow it, save he who has tasted this sweetness. God requires from us no slavish service: he will have us to come to him cheerfully, and this is the very reason why the prophet commends the sweetness of God's word so often in this psalm. If it is demanded in what sense he declares that he took such sweet delight in God's Law, which, according to the testimony of Paul, (1 Cor. iii. 9,) does nothing else but strike fear into men, the solution is easy: The prophet does not speak of the dead letter which kills those who read it, but he comprehends the whole doctrine of the Law, the chief part of which is the free covenant of salvation. When Paul contrasts the Law with the Gospel, he speaks only of the commandments and threatenings. Now if God were only to command, and to denounce the curse, the whole of his communication would, undoubtedly, be deadly. But the prophet is not here opposing the Law to the Gospel; and, therefore, he could affirm that the grace of adoption, which is offered in the Law, was sweeter to him than honey; that is to say, that no delight was to him equal to this. What I have previously said must be remembered, that the Law of God will be unsavoury to us, or, at least, that it will never be so sweet to us, as to

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withdraw us from the pleasures of the flesh, until we have struggled manfully against our own nature, in order to subdue the carnal affections which prevail within us.

104. *By thy statutes I have acquired understanding.* The prophet seems here to invert the order he has just now laid down. He observed that he had kept his feet from going astray, that he might observe God's Law, and now he institutes a contrary order, beginning with the observance of the Law; for he declares that he had been taught by the word of God before he amended his faults. Yet these two things are not inconsistent,—that the faithful should withdraw themselves from their wanderings, in order to frame their life according to the rule of God's word, and that when they are already advanced a considerable way in a holy life, the fear of God being then more vigorous in them, they should regard all vices with more intense hatred. The beginning of a good life, unquestionably, is when a man endeavours to purge himself from vices; and the more a man has made progress in a good life, he will burn with a proportionate zeal in his detestation of vices and in shunning them. Moreover, we are taught by the words of the prophet, that the reason why men are so involved in falsehoods, and entangled in perverse errors, is, because they have not learned wisdom from the word of God. As the whole world are given to folly, those who wander astray plead in excuse, that it is difficult for them to guard against the allurements of vice. But the remedy will be near at hand, if we follow the counsel of the prophet; that is to say, if, instead of leaning on our own wisdom, we seek understanding from the word of God, in which he not only shows what is right, but also fortifies our minds, and puts us on our guard against all the deceits of Satan, and all the impostures of the world. Would to God that, at the present day, this were thoroughly impressed on the minds of all who boast themselves of being Christians; for then they would not be continually driven about, as the greater part of them are, with such inconstancy, according to the conflicting impulses of prevailing opinions. As Satan is so sedulously exerting himself to spread abroad the mists of error,

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let us apply ourselves with the greater earnestness to the acquisition of this wisdom.

ג 105. *Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*
ג 106. *I have sworn, and will perform, to keep thy righteous judgments.*
ג 107. *I am greatly afflicted, O Jehovah! quicken me according to thy word.*
ג 108. *O Jehovah! I beseech thee let the free-will-offerings of my mouth be acceptable to thee, and teach me thy judgments.*
ג 109. *My soul is continually in my hand; and I have not forgotten thy law.*
ג 110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me; and I have not erred from thy statutes.*
ג 111. *I have thy testimonies as an inheritance for ever; for they are the joy of my heart.*
ג 112. *I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes for ever to the end.*

105. *Thy word is a lamp to my feet.* In this verse the Psalmist testifies that the Divine Law was his schoolmaster and guide in leading a holy life. He thus, by his own example, prescribes the same rule to us all; and it is highly necessary to observe this rule; for while each of us follows what seems good in his own estimation, we become entangled in inextricable and frightful mazes. The more distinctly to understand his intention, it is to be noted, that the word of God is set in opposition to all human counsels. What the world judges right is often crooked and perverse in the judgment of God, who approves of no other manner of living, than that which is framed according to the rule of his law. It is also to be observed, that David could not have been guided by God's word, unless he had first renounced the wisdom of the flesh, for it is only when we are brought to do this, that we begin to be of a teachable disposition. But the metaphor which he uses implies something more; namely, that unless the word of God enlighten men's path, the whole of their life is enveloped in darkness and obscurity, so that they cannot do anything else than miserably wander from the right way; and again, that when we submit ourselves with docility to the

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teaching of God's law, we are in no danger of going astray. Were there such obscurity in God's word, as the Papists foolishly talk about, the commendation with which the prophet here honours the law would be altogether undeserved. Let us, then, be assured that an unerring light is to be found there, provided we open our eyes to behold it. The Apostle Peter (2 Epist. i. 19) has more plainly expressed the same sentiment, when he commends the faithful for taking heed to the word of prophecy, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

106. *I have sworn, and will perform.* Here the Psalmist speaks of his own constancy. He had declared a little before, that during the whole course of his life, he had not declined from God's law, and now he speaks of the purpose of his mind. By the word *swear*, he intimates that he had solemnly pledged himself to God not to alter his determination. The true manner of keeping God's law is to receive and embrace what he commands heartily, and, at the same time, uniformly, that our ardour may not forthwith abate, as is often the case. This also is the proper rule of vowing, that we may offer ourselves to God, and dedicate our life to him. It may, however, be asked, whether the prophet's oath may not be condemned as rash, inasmuch as he presumed to engage to do far more than man's ability is equal to; for who is able to keep the law? The man, then, it may be alleged, vows rashly, who promises to God a thing which it is beyond his power to accomplish. The answer is obvious: Whenever the faithful vow to Him, they do not look to what they are able to do of themselves, but they depend upon the grace of God, to whom it belongs to perform what he requires from them, in the way of supplying them with strength by his Holy Spirit. When the question is in reference to service to be rendered to God, they cannot vow anything without the Holy Spirit; for, as Paul says in 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." But when God stretches forth his hand to us, he bids us be of good courage, and promises that he will never fail us; and this is the source from which the boldness to swear, here spoken of,

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proceeds. Nor is it any rashness at all, when, confiding in his promises, by which he anticipates us, we, on our part, offer ourselves to his service. The question, however, still remains unsolved; for although the children of God ultimately prove victorious over all temptations by the grace of the Holy Spirit, yet there is always some infirmity about them. But it is to be observed, that the faithful, in making vows and promises, have a respect not only to that article of the covenant, by which God has promised that he will cause us to walk in his commandments, but also to that other article which is, at the same time, added concerning the free forgiveness of their sins, Ezek. xi. 20; xxxvi. 27; Ps. ciii. 13. David, therefore, according to the measure of grace given him, bound himself by oath to keep God's law, encouraged by these words of the prophet, "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Mal. iii. 17.

107. *I am greatly afflicted, O Jehovah!* This verse teaches, that God did not cherish the fathers under the law in his bosom so delicately as not to exercise them with grievous temptations; for the Psalmist declares that he was not afflicted lightly, or in an ordinary degree, but above measure. His prayer *to be quickened* implies that he was at the point of death. He, however, at the same time, shows, that though he was besieged by death, he yet fainted not, because he leaned upon God—a point worthy of special notice; for though, at the beginning, we may call upon God with much alacrity, yet when the trial increases in severity, our hearts quail, and, in the extremity of fear, our confidence is extinguished. Yet the prophet implores God for grace, not in order to his life being preserved in safety, but in order to his recovering the life he had lost, which indicates both the low condition to which he was reduced, and his continued confidence in God. We must also observe attentively the last part of the clause, *according to thy word.* We will pray coldly, or rather we will not pray at all, if God's promise does not inspire us with courage in our sorrow and distress. In short, as we have said elsewhere, it is indispensably neces-

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sary that we should have this key at hand, in order to our having free access to the throne of grace.

108. *O Jehovah! I beseech thee, let the free-will-offerings of my mouth.* This verse may be read in one connected sentence, as well as divided into two members. According to the former view, the sense will be, Receive, O Lord, my sacrifices, to this end, that thou mayest teach me thy commandments. If we prefer dividing the verse into two clauses, then it will consist of two separate prayers; first, a prayer that God would accept the prophet's sacrifices; and, secondly, a prayer that he would instruct him in the doctrine of the law. I am rather inclined to follow the first opinion. The prophet affirms, as we have seen elsewhere, that nothing was more precious to him than to understand the doctrine of the law. Lord, as if he had said, do thou, according to thy good pleasure, accept the sacrifices which I offer thee; and as my chief desire is, to be instructed aright in thy law, grant that I may be a partaker of this blessing, which I am so anxious to obtain. We should mark all the places in which the knowledge of divine truth is preferred to all the other benefits bestowed upon mankind; and doubtless, since it contains in it the pledge of everlasting salvation, there is good reason why it should be esteemed as an inestimable treasure. Yet the prophet begins at a point remote from this, praying that God would vouchsafe to approve of and accept his services. By the word נדבות, *nidboth*, I have no doubt he denotes the sacrifices which were called *free-will-offerings*. I indeed grant that he speaks properly of vows and prayers; but as the chosen people, to propitiate God, were wont to offer sacrifices, according as every man had ability, he alludes to that custom which prevailed under the law; even as Hosea (chap. xiv. 2) designates the praises of God "the calves of the lips." It was the design of God, by that ceremony, to testify to the fathers that no prayers were acceptable to him, but those which were joined with sacrifice, that they might always turn their minds to the Mediator. In the first place, he acknowledges that he was unworthy of obtaining any thing by his prayers, and that, if God heard him, it proceeded from his free and unmerited

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grace. In the second place, he desires that God would be favourable to him in the way of enabling him to profit aright in the doctrine of the law. The verb רָצָה, *ratsah*, which he uses, signifies *to favour of mere good will.* Whence it follows, that there is nothing meritorious in our prayers, and that, whenever God hears them, it is in the exercise of his free goodness.

109. *My soul is continually in my hand.* He declares, that no calamities, afflictions, or dangers, which he had experienced, had withdrawn him from the service of God, and the observance of his law. *To bear his soul in his hand,* is equivalent to his being in danger of his life, so that the soul was, as it were, abandoned to the wind. Thus Job, (chap. xiii. 14,) when he pines in his miseries, and is looking for death every moment, and dreading it, complains that his soul was in his hand; as if he had said, It is plucked from its own dwelling-place, and is under the dominion of death.[1] This form of expression is therefore unhappily wrested to an absurd meaning by ignorant people, who understand the prophet as

[1] This proverbial expression occurs in several other places of Scripture, in all of which it undoubtedly signifies, that the life of the person who employs it is in danger; as in Judges xii. 3, "And when I saw that ye delivered me not, *I put my life in my hands,* and passed over against the children of Ammon;" 1 Sam. xix. 5, "*He put his life in his hand,* and slew the Philistines;" and 1 Sam. xxviii. 21, "And the woman came unto Saul, and said, *I have put my life in my hand.*" Phillips thus explains the figure: "We are accustomed to say, that an affair is in a person's hands when the management and issue of it rest entirely with him, and so we speak when that affair is the life or death of an individual. Hence, similarly, when the Hebrews spoke of a person's life being in his own hands, they might mean, that the preservation of his life was entirely with him, that he was destitute of all external assistance, and that consequently his life was in danger. This is particularly the case with military men, who, as they fight bravely, or otherwise, may preserve or lose their lives: so Jephthah, as appears from the passages above cited." The figure may, however, be taken from the circumstance, that what a man carries openly in his hand is in danger of falling, or of being snatched away by violence. "The LXX. have changed the person of the pronoun, ἐν ταῖς χερσί σου, *in thy hands;* as also the Syriac. It is probable that these ancient interpreters did not understand the phrase, and so expressed it according to what they thought might be the original reading, thus affording a very obvious sense. Augustine says, that many MSS. in his time had the second person. However, no such MSS. are known now, and there is no doubt whatever of the correctness of the present text. The Psalmist states that, though his life was in danger, yet he did not forget God's law."—*Ibid.*

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intimating, that it was in his own power to govern his life as he pleased. So far from intending to convey such an idea, by this circumstance he commends his own piety, declaring, that although he was tossed among shipwrecks, and death in a hundred forms hovered before his eyes, so that he could not rest in security for a single moment, yet he had not cast from him the love and study of the Divine law. Here, again, it is well to notice the severe and arduous conflicts by which the fathers, under the law, were tried, that dangers and fears may not frighten us, or, by the weariness they produce, deprive us of courage, and thus prevent the remembrance of the Divine law from remaining impressed on our hearts.

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me.* The meaning of this verse is similar to that of the preceding. The prophet shows more definitely in what respect he carried his life in his hand; namely, because, being hemmed in on all sides by the snares of the wicked, he saw scarcely any hope of life. We have previously observed how difficult it is to avoid wandering from the ways of the Lord, when our enemies, by their subtle arts, endeavour to effect our destruction. The depraved desire of our fallen nature incites us to retaliate, nor do we see any way of preserving our life, unless we employ the same arts by which they assail us; and we persuade ourselves that it is lawful for us to howl among wolves. Such being the case, we ought, with the more attention, to meditate upon this doctrine, That, when the wicked environ and besiege us by their wiles, the best thing we can do is to follow whither God calls us, and to attempt nothing but what is agreeable to his will.

111. *I have thy testimonies as an inheritance for ever.* He again confirms the sentiment, which cannot be too often repeated, That the law of God was more precious to him than all the pleasures, riches, and possessions, of the world. I have said, that it is not in vain that these things are so often repeated; for we see how violently the men of the world boil to gratify their unruly lusts, with what multiplied anxieties they are agitated, while they are unceasingly coveting innumerable objects; and, in the meantime, scarcely one in a hundred is, in a mo-

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derate degree, aiming to apply his mind to the study of the Divine law. The prophet, then, to stir us up by his own example, asserts, that he took such pleasure in God's testimonies as to esteem nothing more precious. It is love only which leads us to set a value on any object; and, therefore, it is requisite, in order to our observing the Divine law with the reverence due to it, that we begin with this delight in it. It is not wonderful, if God's testimonies convey to our minds a joy, which, causing us to reject and despise all other things, holds our affections fast bound to them. What can be sweeter than to have heaven opened to us, that we may come freely into the presence of God, when, adopting us to be his children, he pardons our sins? What can be more desirable than to hear that he is so pacified towards us, as to take upon himself the care of our life? This I have thought good to observe briefly, that we might not think it strange to find David rejoicing so greatly in God's law. The similitude of *inheritance* is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures; and we apply the designation of *inheritance* to that which we hold in the highest estimation, so that we are contented to be deprived of all other things, provided we retain the safe and full possession of that one thing. Accordingly, the prophet intimates, that whatever good things he had obtained he accounted them as adventitious, and that the truths revealed in God's word alone were to him as an inheritance. Without the Divine word all other things were in his estimation as nothing; so that he could willingly leave to others, riches, honours, comforts, and pleasures, provided he possessed this incomparable treasure. It is not meant to say that he altogether despised the temporal benefits which God bestows, but his mind was not bound fast to them.

112. *I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes.* In this verse he describes the right observance of the law, which consists in our cheerfully and heartily preparing ourselves for doing what the law commands. Slavish and constrained obedience differs little from rebellion. The prophet, therefore, in order briefly to define what it is to serve God, asserts, that he applied not only his hands, eyes, or feet, to the keep-

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ing of the law, but that he began with the affection of the heart. Instead of the verb *incline*, the verb *extend* might with propriety be employed; but I am inclined to rest in the more generally received interpretation, which is, that he devoted himself with sincere affection of heart to the observance of the law. This inclination of the heart is opposed to the wandering lusts which rise up against God, and drag us any where rather than incline us to a virtuous life. The attempt of the Papists to defend from this passage their doctrine of free will is mere trifling. They infer from the words of the prophet, that it is in the power of man to bend his own heart in whatever way he pleases. But the answer is easy. The prophet does not here boast of what he had done by his own strength, for he now repeats the very same word which he had employed before, when he said, *Incline my heart to thy testimonies.* If that prayer was not feigned, he doubtless acknowledged by it that it was the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit to incline and frame our hearts to God. But it is no new thing for that to be ascribed to us which God works in us: Paul's statement to this effect is very plain, "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," (Philip. ii. 13.) When the prophet says of himself that *he inclined his heart*, he does not separate his own endeavour from the grace of the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration he has previously declared that the whole was done. At the same time, he distinguishes the constancy of his pious affection from the transient fervour of others. Thus, that he might not fail in the midst of his course, or even go backward, he affirms that he had resolved to continue in the same course during the whole of his life. The word עֵקֶב, *ekeb, to the end*, in my opinion, is added to the word לְעוֹלָם, *leolam, for ever*, by way of exposition; and to show us that he struggled manfully against all obstacles and difficulties, that they might not break his constancy; for no man perseveres in the service of God without arduous exertions. Some take the word as denoting *a reward;*[1] but this seems too foreign to the design of the passage.

[1] Thus, in the Arabic, it is, "on account of an eternal reward;" that is, the reward of grace promised to all the faithful. According to this

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ד 113. *I have hated crooked thoughts, and loved thy law.*
ד 114. *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I have trusted in thy word.*
ד 115. *Depart from me, ye wicked! and I will keep the commandments of my God.*
ד 116. *Sustain me by thy word, and I shall live: and make me not ashamed of my expectation.*
ד 117. *Establish me, and I shall be safe: and I will consider thy statutes continually.*
ד 118. *Thou hast trodden under foot all those who wander from thy statutes; for their deceit is falsehood.*
ד 119. *Thou hast made all the wicked of the earth to cease as dross; therefore I have loved thy testimonies.*
ד 120. *My flesh trembled for fear of thee, and I was afraid of thy judgments.*

113. *I have hated crooked thoughts.* Those who are of opinion that the word סֵעֲפִים, *seaphim*, the first in the verse, and which is rendered *crooked thoughts*, is an appellative noun, translate it, *those who think evil*;[1] but it is more correct to understand it of the thoughts themselves,[2] and this interpretation is very generally adopted. The noun סָעַף, *saeph*, properly signifies *a branch*, but it is applied metaphorically to the *thoughts*, which, growing out of the heart, as branches from the trunk of a tree, spread themselves in every direction. As there is no doubt that in this passage the term is taken in a bad sense, I have added the epithet, *crooked*, which the etymology of the word requires.[3] As the branches of

view, the Psalmist would have a respect to the end and reward of faith and holy obedience. See Heb. xi. 26; 1 Pet. i. 8, 9. As, however, the Psalmist, like all true believers, did not embrace and obey the law of God, only or chiefly from the hope of reward, but was chiefly attracted to obedience by love to God, and the intrinsic excellence of the law, others prefer reading "the reward *is* eternal."

[1] In the Chaldee, it is "vain thinkers;" and thus the meaning would be, "I hate men that think evil, that devise wicked devices, or that have false and evil opinions, opposite to God's law, or tending to seduce men from it."

[2] It signifies *thoughts* in Job iv. 14, and xx. 2; and *opinions* in 1 Kings xviii. 21: and these may be either good or evil, their character being determined by the context of the passage in which the word occurs.

[3] The sense of the text also requires that the word for *thoughts* should here be taken in a bad sense, for the Psalmist affirms that he hates them, and sets God's law in opposition to them. Various epithets have been supplied to describe the character of these thoughts, such as "crooked,"

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a tree shoot out transversely, entangled and intertwined, so the thoughts of the human mind are, in like manner, confusedly mingled together, turning and twisting about in all directions. Some Jewish interpreters understand it of the laws of the heathen, which, they say, were cut off from the law of God, as branches from a tree; but although this is ingenious, it has no solidity. I therefore keep by the more simple explanation, That the crooked inventions of the human heart, and whatever the wicked devise, according to their own perverse understandings, are set in opposition to the law of God, which alone is right. And, assuredly, whoever would truly embrace the law of God, must, necessarily, as his first business, divest himself of all unhallowed and sinful thoughts, or rather go out of his own nature. Such is the meaning, unless, perhaps, preferring another metaphor, we understand סְעִפִּים, *seaphim*, to signify *high thoughts*, since the verb סָעַף, *saäph*, is taken for *to lift up*. Now we know that no sacrifice is more acceptable to God than obedience, when we entertain low thoughts of ourselves; and thus our docility begins with humility. But as this exposition may seem also far-fetched, I pass from it. Let what I have said suffice us, That since God acknowledges as the disciples of his law those only who are well purified from all contrary imaginations, which corrupt our understanding, the prophet here protests that he is an enemy to all crooked thoughts, which are wont to draw men hither and thither.

114. *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield.* The meaning is, that the prophet, persuaded that the only way in which he could be safe, was by lying hid under the wings of God, confided in his promises, and, therefore, feared nothing. And,

by Calvin, "vain," by our English version, and "high minded," by Luther. Ainsworth supplies *wavering*, observing, that the original term denotes the top branches of trees, which are figuratively applied to the thoughts or opinions of the mind, to denote that they are wavering and uncertain, as 1 Kings xviii. 21; or to persons distracted with their own cogitations. Poole remarks, agreeably to Calvin's interpretation, that the thoughts, or opinions, or devices of men differing from, or opposite to God's law, may be intended, since, in the next clause, God's law is opposed to them, and as some, both Jewish and Christian, expositors understand the Hebrew word.

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assuredly, the first point is, that the faithful should hold it as a settled principle, that amidst the many dangers to which they are exposed, the preservation of their life is entirely owing to the protection of God; in order that they may be excited to flee to Him, and leaning upon his word, may confidently wait for the deliverance which he has promised. This confidence, *That God is our refuge and our shield*, is, no doubt, derived from the word; but we must remember that there is here a mutual relation—that, when we have learned from the word of God that we have in him a safe hiding-place, this truth is to be cherished and confirmed in our hearts, under a consciousness of our absolute need of the divine protection. Besides, although his power ought abundantly to suffice in inspiring us with the hope of salvation, yet we should always set the word before us, that our faith may not fail when his aid is slow in coming.

115. *Depart from me, ye wicked!* Some explain this verse as if David declared that he would devote himself with more alacrity and greater earnestness to the keeping of the law, when the wicked should have desisted from assaulting him. And, unquestionably, when we feel that God has delivered us, we are more than stupid if this experience does not stir up within us an earnest desire to serve him. If godliness does not increase in us in proportion to the sense and experience we have of God's grace, we betray base ingratitude. This, then, is a true and useful doctrine; but the prophet meant to convey a different sentiment in this place. As he saw how great a hinderance the ungodly are to us, he banishes them to a distance from him; or rather, he testifies that he will beware of entangling himself in their society. Nor has he said this so much for his own sake as to teach us by his example, that if we would hold on in the way of the Lord without stumbling, we must endeavour, above all things, to keep at the greatest possible distance from worldly and wicked men, not in regard to distance of place, but in respect of intercourse and conversation. Provided we contract an intimate acquaintance with them, it is scarcely possible for us to avoid being speedily corrupted by the contagion of their

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example. The dangerous influence of fellowship with wicked men is but too evident from observation; and to this it is owing, that few continue in their integrity to the close of life, the world being fraught with corruptions. From the extreme infirmity of our nature, it is the easiest thing in the world to catch infection, and to contract pollution even from the slightest touch. The prophet, then, with good reason, bids the wicked depart from him, that he may advance in the fear of God without obstruction. Whoever entangles himself in their companionship will, in process of time, proceed the length of abandoning himself to a contempt of God, and of leading a dissolute life. With this statement agrees the admonition of Paul, in 2 Cor. vi. 14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It was, indeed, beyond the prophet's power to chase the wicked to a distance from him; but by these words he intimates, that from henceforth he will have no intercourse with them. He emphatically designates God as *his God*, to testify that he makes more account of him alone than of all mankind. Finding extreme wickedness universally prevailing on the earth, he separated himself from men, that he might join himself wholly to God. At the present day, that bad examples may not carry us away to evil, it greatly concerns us to put God on our side, and to abide constantly in him, because he is ours.

116. *Sustain me by thy word, and I shall live.* Many read, *According to thy word*, so that the letter ב, *beth*, which signifies *in*, is taken for the letter כ, *caph*, which signifies *as*; and thus the sense would be, Sustain me according to the promise which thou hast made to me, or, as thou hast promised to me. And, undoubtedly, whenever God stretches out his hand to us to raise us up when we are fallen, or supports us with his hand, he fulfils his promises. The prophet, however, seems to pray, that constancy of faith may be given him, to enable him to continue stedfast in the Divine word. We are said to fall from God's word when we fall from the faith of it; and in like manner, so long as we repose upon the truth and certainty of it, he is our sustainer. But as the prophet

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well knew that there is not strength in man adequate to this, he asks from God ability to persevere as the singular gift of the Holy Spirit. It follows, then, that true stability is to be found no where else but in the word of God; and that no man can stedfastly lean upon it but he who is strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must therefore always beseech God, who alone is the author and finisher of faith, to maintain in us this grace. Farther, when the Psalmist places life in faith, he teaches, that all that men promise themselves without the word is mere falsehood. It is therefore the Lord alone who quickens us by his word, even as it is said in Habakkuk, (ii. 4,) "The just shall live by faith." Both passages have the same meaning. After Habakkuk has derided the foolish confidence of the flesh, with which men are generally inflated, and as manifested in their raising themselves on high that they may fall with the greater violence, he shows, that the faithful alone, whom the word of God sustains, stand upon safe and sure ground.

If the first interpretation is adopted, the second clause, *make me not ashamed of my expectation*, will be added by way of exposition; for these two things—the prayer that the prophet may be preserved by God's grace according to his word, and the prayer that he may reap the fruit of his hope—would amount to nearly the same thing. Yet, after having beseeched God to grant him constancy to persevere, he seems now to proceed farther, praying that God would, in very deed, show the thing which he had promised. Every man's own infirmity bears witness to the many doubts which intrude into our minds, when, after long endurance, the issue is not answerable to our expectation; for God, in that case, seems to disappoint us.

To the same effect is the next verse, except that no express mention is made of the word; and *safety* is put for *life*. The prophet means to say, that whenever God withdrew his word, it would be all over with his safety; but that, if he were established by the Divine power, there was nothing of which he would have reason to be afraid. The verb שָׁעָה, *shaäh*, which we have translated *I will consider*, is rendered by many, *I will delight*, and this sense is not unsuitable; for although

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God may give a very desirable taste of his goodness in his bare word, yet the savour of it is not a little increased when to the word the effect is added, provided we do not perversely separate God's benefits from his promises. It is the true wisdom of faith to consider all his benefits as the result or fruit of his promises, of which, if we make no account, the enjoyment of all his good things will be of little advantage to us, or rather will often prove hurtful and deadly. Yet it appears to me preferable to render the verb by *consider;* for the more experience any man has of God's help, the more ought he to awaken himself to consider heavenly doctrine. The Psalmist adds, that he will continue to persevere in this meditation during the whole of his life.

118. *Thou hast trodden under foot all those who wander from thy statutes.* By *treading under foot* he means, that God overthrows all the despisers of his law, and casts them down from that loftiness which they assume to themselves. The phrase is directed against the foolish, or rather frantic, confidence with which the wicked are inflated, when they recklessly deride the judgments of God; and, what is more, scruple not to magnify themselves against him, as if they were not subject to his power. The last clause is to be particularly noticed: *For their deceit is falsehood.*[1] By these words the prophet teaches, that the wicked gain nothing by their wiles, but that they are rather entangled in them, or at length discover that they were mere sleight of hand. Those ignorantly mar the sense who interpose the copula *and*, as if it had been said, that *deceit and falsehood were in them.* The word רמיה, *remyah*, signifies *a subtle and crafty device.* Interpreters, indeed, often translate it *thought;* but this term does not sufficiently express the propriety and force of the Hebrew word. The prophet means, that, however well pleased the wicked are with their own cunning, they yet do nothing else than deceive themselves with falsehood. And it was needful

[1] Dimock thinks that, by this expression, the Psalmist probably alludes to the *Lex Talionis* amongst the Jews, and that the Apostle might refer to this passage in 2 Thess. ii. 11; where he says, "that God should send them strong *delusion*, that they should believe a *lie*."

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to add this clause; for we see how the great bulk of mankind are fatally intoxicated with their own vain imaginations, and how difficult it is to believe what is here asserted,—that the more shrewd they are in their own estimation, the more do they deceive themselves.

119. *Thou hast made all the wicked of the earth to cease as dross.* The meaning of this verse is similar to that of the preceding. By the similitude employed, there is described a sudden and an unexpected change, when their imaginative glory and happiness become dissipated in smoke. It is to be observed, that the vengeance of God against the wicked is not all at once manifested, so that they completely perish, or are exterminated from the earth; but as God, in rooting them out one after another, shows himself to be the judge of the world, and that he is purging the earth of them, it is not wonderful to find the prophet speaking of their destruction in this manner; for the Hebrew verbs often denote a continued act. As God, then, executes his judgments by little and little, and often suspends punishment until he see that the wicked abuse his long-suffering; it becomes us, on our part, to continue patiently waiting until, as a heathen writer observes, he compensate the delay of the punishment, by its severity when inflicted. It is abundantly evident, that the particle of similitude, *as*, is to be supplied before the word *dross*.[1] Nor do I reject the opinion of those who assert, that the wicked are compared to dross, because, so long as they are mingled among the faithful as dregs, they infect and contaminate them; but when they are removed as scum, the purity of the godly shines forth with improved lustre. In the second place, the prophet adds, that the judgments of God were not without fruit in him, since they led him to love the doctrine

[1] "Before the noun סִגִים, rendered *dross*, the particle כ, of similitude, is understood, so that the Psalmist says, 'Thou hast entirely removed (made to cease) all the wicked of the earth as dross,' which is removed from metals by fusion, or from corn by winnowing. The society of men is as a mass of metal in which the wicked are as rust and dross. The judgments of God, which are searching, will cause a separation of the dross from the metal, and thus He will destroy the one and preserve the other."—*Phillips.*

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of the law the more. Those who are not induced to commit themselves to the protection of God, whenever, by lifting up his hand, he shows that the world is governed by his power, must certainly be very perverse; but when, of his own good pleasure, he offers himself to us by his word, those who do not make haste to embrace so great a boon are stupid indeed. On the other hand, when he connives for a long time at the wickedness of men, devout affection, which should ravish us with the love of God's word, languishes.

120. *My flesh hath trembled for fear of thee.*[1] At first sight the prophet seems to contradict himself. He had just now said, that, by God's severity, he was gently drawn to love his testimonies; now he declares, that he was seized with terror. But although these two effects differ widely from each other, yet, if we consider by what kind of discipline God forms us to reverence his law, we will perceive that they entirely harmonise. We require to be subdued by fear, that we may desire and seek after the favour of God. Since fear, then, is the beginning of love, the prophet testifies, that he was awakened by a heart-felt fear of God to look well to himself. Nor is the mortification of the flesh so easy a matter, as that every one should consent to enter upon it, without the constraint of violent means; and, therefore, it is not wonderful if God struck his servant with terror, that, in this way, he might bend his mind to a holy fear of him. It is an evidence of no common wisdom to tremble before God when he executes his judgments, of which the majority of mankind take no notice. We are then taught by these words of the prophet, that we ought to consider attentively the judgments of God, that they may not only gently instruct us, but that they may also strike us with such terror as will lead us to true repentance.

[1] The verb סָמַר, *samar*, rendered *hath trembled*, denotes being seized with horror, so that the hair stands on end. It occurs in Piel in Job iv. 15. This state of horror was produced on the mind of the Psalmist by a contemplation of the divine judgments executed on the wicked, who are rejected like dross; and he was thus brought to fear God.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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*** PSALMS c., ci., cvi.-cxix., 61st verse, of this volume, are translated by the Rev. JOHN HUNTER, Savock.

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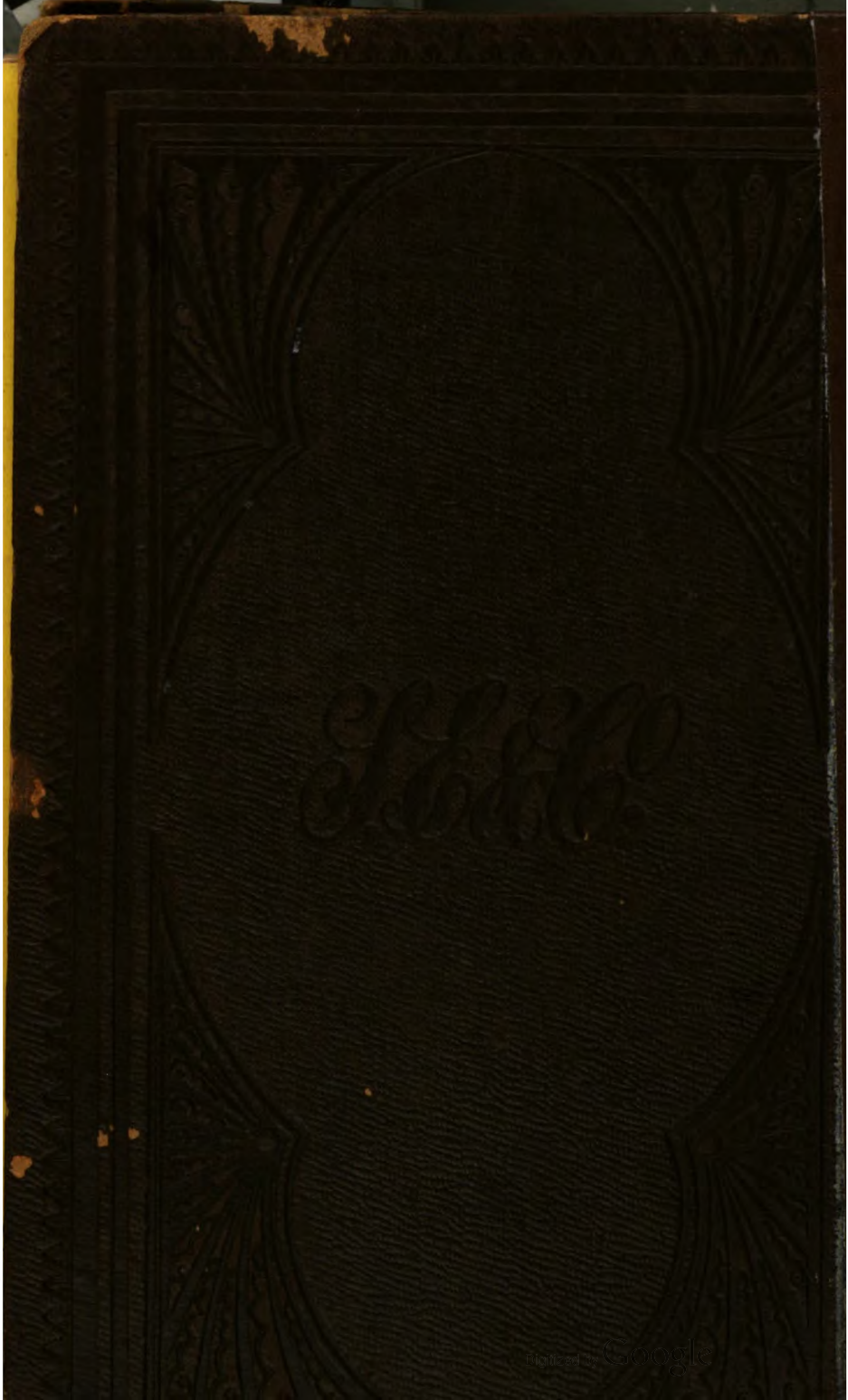
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